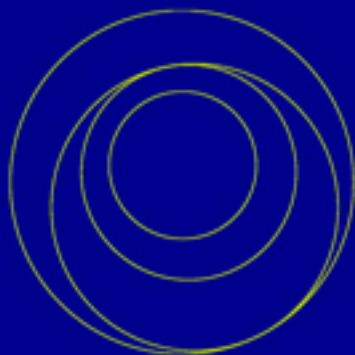


THE NEW HEGELIANS

POLITICS AND PHILOSOPHY IN
THE HEGELIAN SCHOOL



DOUGLAS MOGGACH

CAMBRIDGE

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The New Hegelians

Politics and Philosophy in the Hegelian School

The period leading up to the Revolutions of 1848 is a seminal moment in the history of political thought, demarcating the ideological currents and defining the problems of freedom and social cohesion that are among the key issues of modern politics. This anthology offers new research on Hegel's followers in the 1830s and 1840s. Including essays by well-known philosophers, political scientists, and historians from Europe and North America, it pays special attention to questions of state power, the economy, poverty, and labour, as well as to a range of ideas about freedom. The book examines the political and social thought of Eduard Gans, Ludwig Feuerbach, Max Stirner, Bruno and Edgar Bauer, the young Engels, and Marx. It places them in the context not only of Hegel's philosophy but also of the Enlightenment, Kant, the French Revolution, industrialisation, and urban poverty. It also views Marx and Engels in a new light in relation to their contemporaries and interlocutors in the Hegelian school.

Douglas Moggach is a professor of political science and philosophy at the University of Ottawa. A recipient of a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship, he has held visiting appointments at Clare Hall; King's College, Cambridge; the University of Toronto; and the Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. He is the author of *The Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer*.

The New Hegelians

Politics and Philosophy in the Hegelian School

Edited by

DOUGLAS MOGGACH

University of Ottawa



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For Iain and Catriona

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Introduction

Hegelianism, Republicanism, and Modernity

Douglas Moggach

I

We have witnessed in recent years a dramatic resurgence of interest in Hegel's philosophy. Hegel's relations to his philosophical precursors, notably Kant and the Enlightenment, have been fundamentally reconceived,¹ and his work has received new interpretations, stressing the dynamic and open character of his reflections. Far from being of merely historical interest, these interpretations have highlighted Hegel's importance for contemporary discussions, such as republicanism² or the intersubjective construction of the self and society.³ Hegel helps to

¹ Among the voluminous literature on this subject, see H. S. Harris, *Hegel's Ladder*, 2 vols. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997); Dieter Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel. Lectures on German Idealism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003); Robert Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology. The Sociality of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); and, also by Pinkard, *German Philosophy 1760–1860. The Legacy of Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). See also Luca Fonnesu and Barbara Henry, eds., *Diritto naturale e filosofia classica tedesca* (Pisa: Paccini, 2000).

² Alan Patten, *Hegel's Idea of Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

³ The seminal work in this field is Ludwig Siep, *Anerkennung als Prinzip der praktischen Philosophie* (Freiburg/München: Karl Alber, 1979). See also Ludwig Siep, "Intersubjektivität, Recht und Staat in Hegels *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*," in D. Henrich and R.-P. Horstmann, eds., *Hegels Philosophie des Rechts* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1982), 255–76. On intersubjective recognition as fundamental to Hegel's conception of spirit, see H. S. Harris, "The Concept of Recognition in Hegel's Jena Manuscripts," in John O'Neill, ed., *Hegel's Dialectic of Desire and Recognition* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1996), 233–52. See also Robert R. Williams, *Recognition. Fichte and Hegel on the Other* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1992). For a contrasting assessment, stressing the failure of Hegel's attempts to devise

initiate the turn away from ideas of the subject as a kind of isolated, self-referential monad that had been widely prevalent since Descartes. This epochal change was in no way undertaken only in the twentieth century, or prompted by discoveries in linguistic analysis, as some commentators claim. Describing subjectivity as formed in matrices of relationships, which are themselves fluid and evolving, Hegel contends that the social bond offers the possibility of a mutual elicitation and enhancement of freedom, not simply its restriction. He issues a profound challenge to common liberal conceptions of society as an instrumental, economic connection, and he strenuously opposes the reduction of the state's functions to the administration of the market or to the exercise of internal or external coercion. Hegel views the state as essentially the site of conscious freedom and self-determination. These views are, in principle at least, closely aligned with the republican model, which has also attracted considerable recent attention as an alternative to liberal, communitarian, and other contemporary accounts.

The recent research on Hegel invites a fresh examination of his school, particularly his politically progressive Left Hegelian or Young Hegelian followers. In the Germany of the 1830s and 1840s, a period of tremendous social and political change and of powerful ideological contestation, the issues of republican freedom and emancipated social life are posed with great clarity, and with resounding effect. We have called this collection the New Hegelians, to emphasise the currency and relevance of their reflections to understanding and refashioning ongoing debates about freedom, selfhood, and the social bond. The authors we examine seek to find in Hegel, and in the critique of Hegel, resources for grasping the central theoretical issues of modernity, working out new categories for its analysis, and intervening in the crisis that accompanied the end of the old political and social order in Europe, and the birth of modern subjectivity. The Hegelianism we study here is the thought of crisis, but also holds out prospects for its overcoming.

This "new Hegelianism" of the nineteenth century intersects with the current Hegel revival in a number of ways. While it is far from receiving unanimous endorsement, recent research tends to interpret Hegel

a theory of intersubjectivity, see Jürgen Habermas, *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985); in English, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987), esp. ch. 1–3, and 11; Vittorio Hösle, *Hegels System. Der Idealismus der Subjektivität und das Problem der Intersubjektivität* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1987), vol. II, 471ff.

as closer to Kant, as more firmly positioned within the legitimate bounds of the Kantian transcendental project. Hegel is severely critical of Kant, but current approaches place this criticism within a shared philosophical horizon. On these readings, the Hegelian system is an attempt to engage with, criticise, and execute more adequately the demands of the Kantian programme, to complete the theoretical revolution that Kant had initiated. Hegel draws out and makes systematic the links among the categories of Kantian thought, rethinks the role of sense perception and conceptual understanding in experience and cognition, and develops the idea of the transcendental subject into a theory of the intersubjective constitution of objectivity.⁴ The Hegelian idea of the unity of thought and being, of conceptual determination and objective process, implies the historical realisation of reason in the world, in the variegated patterns of social life. This approach brings to light and vindicates, within Hegel's position itself, elements that our Left Hegelians stress in their own appropriations of his thought: the immanent, historical, and social character of spirit, and the conception of modernity and political liberation as open-ended and incomplete.⁵ Describing social relations of reciprocity, collaboration, and mutual recognition as the essence of spirit, these revised readings of Hegel open the prospect of a broader dialogue with other contemporary philosophical currents.⁶ But they are also close to the self-images of the Hegelian Left, constructed from its own engagements with Hegel.

Another important aspect of the ongoing Hegel revival involves new publications that make available to us for the first time material on Hegel's teaching activity in Heidelberg and Berlin; many among our Left Hegelians were personally in attendance at these lectures, and were formed by them. The publication of notes from various lecture series shows the system in movement, changing emphases as it confronts different adversaries (such as romanticism, pietism, and traditionalist conservatism). These discoveries are particularly important in the case of

⁴ Thomas Wartenberg, "Hegel's Idealism: The Logic of Conceptuality," in F. C. Beiser (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 120–6, distinguishes nonmetaphysical, category-theoretic, and transcendental-idealist interpretations among recent interpretations.

⁵ Douglas Moggach, "Bruno Bauer's Political Critique, 1840–1841," *Owl of Minerva* 27/2 (1996), 137–54.

⁶ See, for example, Thomas McCarthy, ed., *Hegel and His Legacy*, *European Journal of Philosophy*, 7/2 (1999).

compilations first published posthumously by Hegel's students, such as *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*,⁷ or on *Aesthetics*.⁸ Even where we can refer to a text published by Hegel himself, such as the *Philosophy of Right*,⁹ newly available lecture materials provide a valuable critical perspective on the official version. The discovery of notes from courses prior and subsequent to the published text has raised questions about the status of the *Philosophy of Right* as the definitive statement of Hegelian politics.¹⁰ The pioneer in this field, Karl-Heinz Ilting, argued that other versions of the *Philosophy of Right* were more explicitly republican in their orientation than the published text; the alternative accounts allow the state to repose on a foundation of popular sovereignty, which Hegel's 1821 book repudiates.¹¹ Ilting attributes the abandonment of these more progressive positions (or at least the reluctance to voice them openly) to the effects of the Karlsbad Decrees, a tightening of the censorship regulations that suppressed the expression of dissent in Prussia.¹² This area remains controversial, but the new material makes possible a more nuanced appreciation of Hegel's theory of politics, and of its reception among Hegel's auditors.

⁷ See the new edition of G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, ed. Walter Jaeschke, 3 vols. (Hamburg: Meiner, 1983–5). See also David Kolb, *New Perspectives on Hegel's Philosophy of Religion* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1992).

⁸ G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Kunst* (1823), ed. Anna-Marie Gethmann-Siefert (Hamburg: Meiner, 1998). Compare the standard posthumous compilation, G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik, Sämtliche Werke. Jubiläumsausgabe*, ed. H. Glockner, Band 12 (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1964). See also A.M. Gethmann-Siefert, ed., *Phänomen versus System. Zum Verhältnis von philosophischer Systematik und Kunsturteil in Hegels Berliner Vorlesungen über Ästhetik oder Philosophie der Kunst* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1992).

⁹ G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Meiner, 1955); English translation, based on the 1970 Suhrkamp edition, G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen W. Wood, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

¹⁰ G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Rechtsphilosophie 1818–1831*, ed. K.-H. Ilting, vols. I–IV (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1973–4). Some of this material, from 1817–18 and 1818–19, is available in English: G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on Natural Right and Political Science. The First Philosophy of Right*, trans. J. Michael Stewart and Peter C. Hodgson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

¹¹ This text was published in 1820, though dated 1821.

¹² K.-H. Ilting, "Die 'Rechtsphilosophie' von 1820 und Hegels Vorlesungen über Rechtsphilosophie," in Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Rechtsphilosophie*, vol. I, 25–126. Denise Souchedagues, *Logique et politique hégéliennes* (Paris: Vrin, 1983), 79, disputes Ilting's conclusion that the recently published lectures offer a more markedly republican solution. Another critique of the Ilting hypothesis can be found in Domenico Losurdo, *Hegel et les libéraux, Liberté-Egalité-Etat*, trad. de l'italien par François Mortier (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1992).

Simultaneously, recent work on the history of republicanism¹³ also invites a political reassessment of the Hegelian school, its internal debates, and its polemics against other theoretical currents. The existing literature on republicanism has not focused greatly on German sources, and has insufficiently acknowledged possible intersections with the work of Hegel and his school. The present volume is intended as a partial corrective to this deficiency. As distinct from liberal instrumental approaches to community, and from communitarianism, which invokes particularistic cultural traditions,¹⁴ republicanism as treated in this volume considers the practices and institutions of citizenship as integral to the experience of freedom. Freedom in the republican model is not merely the enjoyment of private rights but involves active citizenship, a life emancipated from domination or heteronomous control, by virtue of the citizens' own public exertions. Historically, important differences exist among republicans as to whether collective self-determination is essentially *protective* of individual liberty in the private realm (Machiavelli) or is *transformative* in respect to its individual members (Aristotle).¹⁵ The latter case may be further distinguished: whether this transformation is taken to be the fulfilment of given, natural ends, as in classical thought; or whether, after Kant, there are no ends authoritatively prescribed within a natural order, but only the self-legislation of reason. The latter position admits still further distinctions, because the call for self-transformation can involve varying combinations of external and internal autonomy, of juridical freedom (or freedom from domination by another will in respect to our external actions) and moral self-transcendence (or being guided by universal criteria in one's political, as well as ethical, choices). The field is enormously complex and cannot be adequately examined here, except insofar as these categories are displayed and refined in the works of individual authors.

¹³ J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975); Quentin Skinner, *Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); *Liberty Before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); *Visions of Politics*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff, eds., *Wealth and Virtue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Martin van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner, eds., *Republicanism. A Shared European Heritage*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Philip Pettit, *Republicanism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

¹⁴ See the critique of communitarianism in Ronald Beiner, *Liberalism, Nationalism, and Citizenship. Essays in the Problem of Political Community* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003).

¹⁵ These and other distinctions are worked out in the literature cited at note 13.

This volume suggests that republicanism is one of the keys to understanding the works of the New or Left Hegelians. While these thinkers are highly disparate, the common starting point of their divergent intellectual trajectories is the repudiation of liberalism, of conservatism and tradition, and of Right Hegelian accommodation to the existing political, social, and religious order¹⁶; and the need to reconceptualise the social bond, so that it appears as a condition of emancipation, and not of abasement or subordination. Their distinctive theories of the state, and of the relation of politics and economics, have recently received growing attention, supplementing and refocusing earlier scholarly interest in their religious criticism.¹⁷ Figures like Eduard Gans,¹⁸ whose work in the 1830s directly prefigures the Left Hegelian school, Ludwig Feuerbach,¹⁹ Bruno Bauer,²⁰ and the early Marx²¹ are coming to be seen in the perspective of comparative republicanism. A specifically Hegelian form of republican thought emerges in the German states, especially Prussia, in the 1830s and 1840s, the period known as the *Vormärz* or the prelude to the Revolutions of March 1848. This development is not accidental, but is rooted in the conceptual structures developed by Hegel himself. The important objective factors conditioning this body of thought (the crisis of the Restoration political order, and the emergence of the social question, or new forms of urban poverty, as a decisive public issue²²) regrettably cannot be examined systematically here, but the effects of crisis ramify throughout the

¹⁶ For a history of the school, see J. E. Toews, *Hegelianism. The Path Toward Dialectical Humanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); "Transformations of Hegelianism," in Beiser, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, 391–403.

¹⁷ Typical of earlier approaches is W. J. Brazill, *The Young Hegelians* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1970).

¹⁸ Michael H. Hoffheimer, *Eduard Gans and the Hegelian Philosophy of Law* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1995); and the extensive writings of Norbert Waszek, listed in the bibliography to this volume.

¹⁹ Warren Breckman, "Ludwig Feuerbach and the Political Theology of Restoration," *History of Political Thought*, 13/3, 1992, 437–62; and by the same author, *Marx, The Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory. Dethroning the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

²⁰ Massimiliano Tomba, *Crisi e critica in Bruno Bauer. Il principio di esclusione come fondamento del politico* (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 2002); Douglas Moggach, *The Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

²¹ Daniel Brudney, *Marx's Attempt to Leave Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998); Etienne Balibar et Gérard Raulet, *Marx démocrate* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2001).

²² Dieter Langewiesche, "Republik, konstitutionelle Monarchie und 'soziale Frage': Grundprobleme der deutschen Revolution von 1848/49," *Historische Zeitschrift*, vol. 230, no. 3 (1980), 529–47.

texts we consider. The focus is rather on the appropriations and critiques of Hegel, and critiques of modern social and political relations, undertaken by the New Hegelians on the political-philosophical left in Germany in the 1830s and 1840s. In exploring this extraordinarily fertile period in the history of political thought, we do not seek to tread the familiar path from Hegel to Marx.²³ Instead, our authors see the New Hegelians (with Gans as an initiator) not as mere transitional characters, but as significant, if often problematic, contributors in their own right to the modern project of subjectivity and freedom. Their thought is a fountainhead for a number of contemporary positions and presciently identifies problems of freedom, social cohesion, and exclusion that continue to define our current concerns. At the same time, Marx, freed of the heavy ideological burden of “existing socialism,” can now be better assessed in relation to his own interlocutors. His critique of state and civil society is better canvassed, and the phases of its development differentiated, in the context of his relations to Hegel and the Hegelian Left. It is this context that clarifies Marx’s understanding of the dynamic character of the social bond, the ethical imperative to secure concrete conditions for the practice of autonomy, and the view of labour as a potential manifestation of spontaneous freedom.

According to Hegel, the Enlightenment had recognised that everything exists for the subject,²⁴ thus preparing the terrain for Kant’s Copernican revolution, the turn toward the centrality of the subject for scientific and moral reasoning; but the Enlightenment had misconstrued its own discovery, seeing the modern subject only as a synthesis of narrow material interests, and as possessing a capacity for empirical, but not pure practical, reason: for happiness and material satisfaction, but not for autonomy. Enlightenment doctrines of utility typically underplayed the capacity to criticise and direct our empirical desires according to a higher but self-given rational law. In light of his distinction of two kinds of practical reason, Kant corrects and extends the Enlightenment viewpoint, but he cannot overcome the basic dualism of his own position. According to Hegel’s critique, the relation of the subject to the natural and social world remains unreconciled in Kantian philosophy, so that autonomy is confined to a subjective attitude that *ought* to be reflected

²³ Sydney Hook, *From Hegel to Marx* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962); alternatively, Karl Löwith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche. The Revolution in Nineteenth Century Thought*, trans. David E. Green (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964).

²⁴ G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. 3, trans. E. S. Haldane and F. H. Simpson (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955), 426–7.

in objectivity, but *is* not; the realisation of reason is constantly deferred, or is confined within the subject alone. The task now is to think through consistently the unity of thought and being, the process whereby reason demonstrates its causal efficacy in the world, and gives itself objective being, shaping the world in its image. For Hegel, this formative power is the dynamic of historical development and provides the key to the comprehension of the present as a shape of spirit, the cumulative result of previous struggles and attainments. Adapting Kant's distinction of empirical and pure practical reason, Hegel links community and virtue to freedom, thus following the modern turn away from the idea of natural or predetermined ends, as these are envisaged in Aristotelian teleology and its aftermath; but he grasps autonomy more concretely than Kant, as requiring participation in political institutions that broaden the scope of freedom and, through mutual recognition, confirm the independence of persons as citizens, not only as consumers or bearers of private rights. Hegel thus takes community non-instrumentally, as a constitutive element of freedom. His theory of the state is not a reversion to a pre-modern and relatively undifferentiated form of social life like the ancient polis, as some interpreters argue,²⁵ but is expressly modern, rooted in the dynamics of civil society, and the need to restrain, but not eliminate, competing interests. But for the New Hegelians, perhaps responding to Hegel's own incitement in his oral lectures, the solution proposed in the *Philosophy of Right* is insufficiently robust and insufficiently republican.

Deriving from these insights, the Left Hegelians defend a universalistic conception of freedom. They offer a critique both of liberal possessive individualism, which equates freedom with private rights, and of traditionalist religious or ethnic allegiances. The Hegelian Left tends to see political community as an enhancement of individual and collaborative possibilities; an important exception is Stirner (at least by 1844, though his earlier journalistic work needs further exploration in this regard). Yet through polemical and discursive processes whose elements are examined here, this body of thought rapidly displays a panoply of other possibilities, in which the unity of thought and being is drastically reconfigured, or rejected in favour of the ineliminable difference between the natural and the social. Various political consequences ensue from these philosophical reflections.

²⁵ Michael Theunissen, "The Repressed Intersubjectivity in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*," in Drucilla Cornell et al., eds., *Hegel and Legal Theory* (London: Routledge, 1991), 3–63.

Like many European republicans of the eighteenth century, the Left Hegelians typically view modern commercial relations as inimical to political virtue. Unlike their precursors, however, they are also alert to the changes that had been wrought in the sphere of production, the new division of labour, and the consequent irreducible diversity of modern civil society. A homogeneous citizenry, on the model of Rousseau, was no longer an attainable, or perhaps even desirable, ideal. Republicans had to develop new views of the possibility of a common political interest, in conditions of burgeoning particularity.

The Left Hegelians respond diversely to this challenge. Some, like Bruno Bauer, develop a theory of positive liberty, where private interests are not the substance of republican politics, but only a starting point. These particular interests must be consciously reshaped through deliberation and critique, so as to make them compatible with universal emancipation. Bauer advocates a more vigorous embrace of the republican model and criticises Hegel's hesitation before the decisive question of the day, the right of the people directly to determine their own constitution. He depicts Hegel's state as an untenable compromise between diametrically opposed principles, popular and monarchical sovereignty.²⁶ Others, like Stirner and Edgar Bauer, come to reject republicanism itself as insufficiently radical, and they advocate anarchism or terroristic solutions to the problem of emancipation. Marx's interventions, too, are set in this context: From the beginning, they seek to recast the relation of universality and particularity in civil society, taking their lead from Hegel's own analyses. It is Marx who draws out most explicitly the political and social ramifications of Hegel's account of labour as the shaping of nature in light of subjective purposes. Marx suggests that spontaneity can be understood as self-activity, implying the cooperative bonds forged in work, the relations of intersubjectivity that condition the transformation and appropriation of the objective world.²⁷ The model for Marx's theory of labour in the 1844 *Manuscripts* is provided by the idea of external teleology in Hegel's *Logic*, whose moments are subjective purpose, means, and product or realised end.²⁸ Marx fuses this teleological idea of labour with concepts of autonomy and heteronomy, derived from Kant. Labour

²⁶ Moggach, *Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer*, 151.

²⁷ William James Booth, "The Limits of Autonomy. Karl Marx's Kant Critique," in Ronald Beiner and W. J. Booth, eds., *Kant and Political Philosophy. The Contemporary Legacy* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993), 245–75.

²⁸ Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844," *Collected Works*, vol. 3 (New York: International Publishers, 1975), 270–82.

is alienated when its ends are heteronomously determined and imposed on active subjects by nonworkers, the owners of the productive apparatus; when, deprived of control over the instruments of their labour, workers are not treated as ends in themselves, but as instruments of another's will; and when they are dispossessed of the products their labour creates. The autonomy of labour means the overcoming of these forms of alienation, so that workers gain control over the relations and purposes of the material interchange that they conduct with nature. As Sayers argues in this volume, Marx's idea of labour retains its Hegelian, teleological aspects even in his later work; and de Souza connects Marx's analysis of social relations to the Hegelian logic of essence, against current versions of empiricism and sensualism.

Where Marx appears to deviate most sharply from Hegel is in his assessment of the conditions for realising universal interests, and in the connection of state and civil society. Marx construes abstract right, the right of ownership that for Hegel (and Gans) is a constitutive element of personhood, as the ideological expression of bourgeois property relations. For Marx, once he accedes to socialist conclusions by 1843, civil society, as the extension of abstract right, is not to be preserved within a state that merely claims to represent conscious freedom and universal interests; this is how he comes to characterise and criticise the republicanism he had earlier shared with Bauer and others. Instead, universality is to be incorporated or merged into the relations that reproduce material social life. In Marx's account of socialism, this implies that the universal dissolves into the particulars: Freedom is actualised when the sphere of production is subject to social control. From this moment, no special forum for the practice of freedom is necessary, and the state is transcended or sublated (*aufgehoben*, to use Hegel's language); the biological metaphor of 'withering away' belongs to the later Engels. A more integral Hegelian logic, though, would resist this conclusion. While the universal must be immanent, it must not be *merely* immanent: Besides being actualised in the particulars, universality must also assume an independent shape and exist as a distinct sphere of self-determining freedom. As Hegel puts it, the universal "is to be distinct as an explicit identity from its implicit objectivity, and thereby to possess externality, yet in this external totality to be the totality's self-determining identity."²⁹ This is the logical form that

²⁹ G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (London: Allen and Unwin, 1969), 754. I have proposed this argument elsewhere: "New Goals and New Ways. Republicanism and Socialism in 1848," in Douglas Moggach and Paul Leduc Browne, eds., *The Social*

the Hegelian state should in principle assume, and to which Hegelian republicans aspire: The political sphere is rooted in the subjective consciousness and activity of its members but also provides them with the intuition and visible form of their freedom in political institutions and structures. As several of our contributors suggest, the Hegelian state of the *Philosophy of Right* may not fully accomplish the synthesis that it envisages, arguably because it fails to address adequately the contradictory nature of civil society, as Eduard Gans begins to make explicit. Marx's critique of the Hegelian state, like the criticisms of other Left Hegelians, may be justified in this regard. But Marx's own solution is also one-sided, grasping the state only as a means of coercion, not as a potential site of conscious freedom, or as a configuration of universality. The account needs to be supplemented, minimally, with the republican ideals of political community, participation, and citizenship, which are contained in the Hegelian form, and which are implicit in Marx's earliest work, as the essays in this collection also show.

II

Norbert Waszek demonstrates that the opening salvoes of the new social criticism, and the New Hegelianism, are fired by Eduard Gans. Waszek fixes attention on the social question, showing how Gans moves beyond Hegel's own understanding of the genesis and the political significance of poverty. This theme is also taken up by Gareth Stedman Jones, in respect to the writings of the young Engels. Waszek argues that for Gans, Hegel's diagnoses of poverty quickly prove to be inadequate to understanding the new phenomena of urban destitution, and he turns to French thought, particularly to some of the ideas developed in the school of Saint-Simon, to find new solutions. Prominent among these are ideas of associations of workers, foreshadowing modern trade unions, which might offset the monopoly of bargaining power currently enjoyed by owners of capital. Retaining Hegel's view of the rationality of private property and its importance for the constitution of modern selfhood, Gans rejects the more extreme associationist claims of common property advanced by some of the Saint-Simonians of his day. Gans also innovates in Hegel's state theory, stressing the need for an institutionalised opposition within the rational modern state, and thus the place for the contestation of interests, as well

as their reconciliation. Though Gans died prematurely in 1839, and his own political preferences were for an Aristotelian middle way, he contributed powerfully to the emergence of the new, radical Hegelianism. Already by 1840, the theory of opposition is central to Left Hegelians' understandings of the future republican state, as well as of their own political role in bringing it to fruition; and the social question remains a dominant theme of their research into the modern condition. While the importance of opposition, struggle, and social exclusion is evident in the young Marx, these ideas are also influential in Bruno Bauer. Bauer applies the Hegelian idea of the free and infinite personality to the state before he applies it to the individual subject,³⁰ and he uses the concept to describe the coming free republic. This will be a state compatible with differentiation and inner opposition, and not requiring uniformity among its citizens. It is charged with the historic mission of assisting the poor ("the helots of civil society,"³¹ in a phrase later echoed by Engels) in winning their emancipation, and constantly revising its own institutions and statutes as the knowledge and practice of freedom grow. Gans himself does not reach these conclusions, but his work provides an important stimulus to their formulation.

Among the theoretical issues raised in Left Hegelian appropriations of Hegel are the relations of thought and being, autonomy and spontaneity, and self-consciousness and substance, which refer us to the philosophical background of the New Hegelianism, especially to Kant and the German romantics. Texts by Howard Williams, Warren Breckman, and José Crisóstomo de Souza pose these questions in respect to Feuerbach. Williams argues that Feuerbach's humanistic critique of religion is anticipated by Kant's reduction of Christianity to its moral core, but Feuerbach seems oblivious of his intellectual debt to his precursor, despite his early immersion in the history of philosophy. Feuerbach seeks to restore the integrity and wholeness of the human personality, and to reconceive the social bond as integral to our being, in the face of the modern culture of fragmentation and disharmony. Hegel had described modernity (in some of its dimensions, at least) as a culture of diremption and conflicting interests, and had explained Kant's own dualisms as reflective of this perspective, whereby subject and object stand in stark opposition (though

³⁰ Douglas Moggach, "Bruno Bauer's Political Critique, 1840–1841," *Owl of Minerva*, 27/2 (Spring 1996), 137–54.

³¹ Bruno Bauer, "Der christliche Staat und unsere Zeit," in *Feldzüge der reinen Kritik*, ed. H. M. Sass (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1968), 33.

for Hegel modernity also possesses resources that make possible the resolution of these antinomies). Feuerbach too diagnoses the ills of modern society as the effects of persistent dualisms, between mind and body, self and nature, person and person. He first tries to overcome these divisions through Hegel's idea of spirit, but this solution soon proves too abstract, too purely intellectual a synthesis. He then develops a sensualistic materialism, with the ethical injunction to limit the egoistic appropriation of nature, and to relate to other subjects through love, as an affirmation of our species-being and the expression of the unity of our emotive and intellectual lives. Feuerbach's critique of religion describes the attributes of the deity as those of the human species, projected into the beyond, and personified or fetishised by orthodoxy as an object of worship. Williams attributes Feuerbach's failure to acknowledge the Kantian roots of this conception to the effects of Hegel's Kant critique, to which Feuerbach remained attentive even when he discarded the Hegelian system. According to Hegel, Kant is too much immersed in the culture of diremption to be able to offer any alternatives to it. The result of Feuerbach's outright rejection of Kant, however, is a narrowing of his own views. Feuerbach responded to Hegel's negative criticism of Kant, but not to his positive appropriation of him. As de Souza argues in his contribution, Feuerbach reduces the Kantian interplay of intuition and concept, of senses and thought, to the absolute predominance and independence of the receptive, sensory element in experience. This causes the loss of the conceptual logic of relation³² and reciprocal action (which Kant anticipated and Hegel retained), in favour of a passive and atomised view of the self, despite Feuerbach's verbal stress on a communal essence. De Souza contends that Marx again retrieves the logic of relation and essence as dynamic, and thus has access to history as a process, in place of Feuerbach's more static conception. In Feuerbach, too, the Kantian ideas of pure practical reason and autonomy recede before empirical satisfaction, and freedom consists in integration into a natural order, rather than free self-determination.

Warren Breckman develops an important comparative perspective on the Left Hegelian movement, indicating its complex relations to romanticism, as well as to Hegel. In doing so, he defends the emancipatory

³² Douglas Moggach, "The Construction of Juridical Space. Kant's Analogy of Relation in *The Metaphysics of Morals*," in *Proceedings of the Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy*, vol. 7, *Modern Philosophy*, ed. Mark Gedney (Bowling Green, Ohio: Philosophy Documentation Center, 2000), 201–9.

potential of Feuerbachian thought. As Breckman puts it, Feuerbach differs from Bruno Bauer in subordinating self-consciousness to a substance that precedes and determines it; here it is the natural substrate, which is irreducible to thought, and which conditions our relations to each other as sentient beings. Feuerbach repudiates the Hegelian idea of unity of thought and being, which remains central to Bauer's republicanism, and also (but debatably, according to our contributors) to Stirner's selfhood. Breckman traces the opposition between Feuerbach and Bruno Bauer through the aesthetic debates with romanticism, and examines conflicting views of symbol, sign, and allegory as depictions of modern subjectivity and its place in the natural and social world. But while Breckman sees significant democratic potential in Feuerbach's naturalism, for de Souza it poses a limit to his political engagement, or to his understanding of the human essence as a practical and free construction. De Souza finds the early Marx superior to Feuerbach in his insight into these dynamic processes of self-forming and self-relating, but also closer to an authentic Hegelianism. Breckman's paper accentuates the rhetorical and discursive aspects of the Hegelian Left. He hears in the formative debates among its proponents the articulation of themes relevant to current political thinking. Recent French social thought is illustrative of similar thematics: the polemical context of politics, and agonistic conceptions of freedom and society.

In his paper, Massimiliano Tomba locates the origins of Bruno Bauer's critical theory in reflection on processes of secularisation and the collapse of traditional, pre-Revolutionary society, divided into estates. Bauer advocates a view of freedom as an incessant struggle against all irrational exclusions and privileges – social, political, religious, and economic. This struggle is undertaken in the name of a new universality, the recognition of equality and the right of individual self-determination. Bauer underlines the need for individuals to act on new and deeper understandings of freedom, not only from immediate self-interest and conformity. Otherwise, stagnation and massification ensue. Bauer's arguments against conformism and thoughtless compliance, and his defence of a reflective, critical individualism as a vehicle for historical progress, anticipate John Stuart Mill, though they represent a distinct perspective, republican rather than liberal in nature; it is not the free competition of particular interests that creates the climate for progress, but their permanent self-transcendence. The prospect of mass society introduces, however, a new dichotomy in Bauer's thought. While in principle he holds open to all the prospect of winning their own freedom, he points to a distinction in practice between

those proving capable and incapable of self-emancipation, and remains indifferent to the fate of the latter: They have failed to avail themselves of the capacity for self-determination that history has now opened to them. Bauer is thus a direct precursor of Nietzsche. Tomba's conclusion is that Bauer's agonistic conception of freedom (which, as other texts in this volume show, he shares with Edgar Bauer and Stirner) and of society (as in Marx) is a fundamental contribution to political thought and to the understanding of modernity. It anticipates many of the insights of contemporary thinking on freedom as an acquisition and a process, rather than a kind of natural property. Tomba's account stresses the fruitfulness for republicanism of the idea of a political identity subject to constant renegotiation and change. This dynamic sense of identity implies struggle against all objective and subjective limitations that cannot bear critical scrutiny. As my own paper also contends, the theme of the struggle for freedom is central to Bauer, who addresses much more insistently than Marx the need for consciously individual, ethical appropriation of universal interests. In stressing the element of self-formation as the basis of freedom, Bauer resembles Max Stirner, though with Bauer this process cannot be understood without an ideal of universality, which Stirner repudiates as a "spook."

My paper distinguishes juridical republicanism from republican rigorism and describes Bauer's position in the *Vormärz* as a version of the latter. This position entails a shifting of the boundaries that Kant had established between right, or the juridical sphere (which concerns only external action, but not its subjective motivations), and morality (inner orientation). In the rigorist model, the motivations and subjective interests of juridical subjects become relevant to assessing the emancipatory potential of their political claims, though the application of this criterion permits varying degrees of stringency, which are attested in Bauer's own work. While differing from Kant's canonical account of the juridical and the moral, Bauer's theory does respond to other Kantian motifs. It is a political reading of Kant's idea of autonomy, differing from Hegel's own extension of the idea because it focuses on processes of permanent transformation, rather than on more stable structures of mutuality and recognition. Bauer's rigorism requires the purging of particular interest and insists that emancipatory political action be undertaken in light of universal norms. As taken over from Kant, the central claim of this idealism is the freedom of the will, the spontaneity of its choices, independent of any cause that might determine it from outside, without its own compliance. Following Kant, Bauer contends that in addition to its spontaneous

aspect, the will is also practical reason. This means that the spontaneity of the will, its ability to give itself its own grounds for action, must be regulated by self-legislation, the adherence to a rule or a generally valid criterion. To count as a moral act, the ends of action require universalistic sanction, unrelated to private interest or appetite. In Bauer's reading, private or particular interest is immediately experienced without critical self-reflection; it is thus heteronomously determined (by something other than the rational will) and is therefore politically inadmissible, insofar as the political is the sphere of self-emancipation from all irrational interests. This is an important application and development of Kant's ideas of spontaneity and autonomy. But, while critical of *particularity*, Bauer is also adamant that *individuality* be preserved. He maintains Hegel's distinction between these two levels of the self, between one's contingent desires and experiences, and one's critical self-awareness and adjudication; but he radicalises the tension between them. This moment of individuality, as Stirner will also insist, is the element of formal self-constitution, the forming of personality through reflective choice, but for Bauer it is undertaken in critical consciousness of universal ends. For him, ends must be both *universal* (valid for everyone) and *immanent* in our own rational will; they must not be transcendent, given by nature, or fixed by a superior or external authority of any kind. The description of a universal that answers these requirements is that of a universal immanent in the idea of history, understood as the record of struggles for liberation from external powers and from uncriticised, therefore merely given, particularity. Bauer defines universal self-consciousness as the capacity to recognise oneself and one's emancipatory interest in the flow and the *agon* of history, and to contribute practically to the solution of these millennial struggles by challenging the dominant institutions and ideas of the age. The universal interest is not to be imposed, but freely willed. Only thus is reason realised. This position may be further connected to current debates about public reason, or the admissibility in the political sphere of arguments arising from private religious or moral convictions. In this context, I examine Bauer's problematic interventions on the question of Jewish emancipation and suggest that they are not fully consistent with his other pronouncements on political liberation.

The nature of Max Stirner's appropriation of Hegel is at issue in the texts by David Leopold and Lawrence Stepelevich. For the latter, Stirner is faithful to one of the central Hegelian insights. His concept of "ownness" or uniqueness is an elaboration of Hegel's idea of spontaneity as self-relation. The ends of action must be validated by personal assent;

or as Ardis Collins puts it here, in modernity, "Everything gets its validity from the individual's personal conviction." According to Stepelevich, Stirner follows Hegel in describing personality as the conscious form in which particular interests and desires are invested with form, coherence, and wholeness; personality is the ability to give oneself one's own determinate characteristics, to transform contingent or given particular desires and characteristics into conscious individuality through reflective choice. In Stirner's thought, the concrete empirical individual can be the embodiment of the Hegelian unity of concept and objectivity, once the perspective of an unflinching self-fashioning is adopted. Stirner's individuals are self-made men, who have formed their personalities by processes of selection and critique. In her contribution at the end of this volume, Collins contends that individuality involves the formal appropriation, as one's own, of a common substance, a common stock of meanings and values. This moment, which Stirner epitomises, is indeed essential to Hegel's understanding of freedom, but, she argues, it is not sufficient in itself. Rather, it leads back to a shared ethical life; it not only differentiates, as Stirner would have it, but also integrates. For Collins, the common substance is not, *pace* Stirner, an inadmissible hypostasis, but is the essential ethical content of a genuine individuality.

Establishing a typology of anarchist thought, David Leopold situates Stirner's political position as a weak *a priori* anarchism. In this view, all states are in principle objectionable as a hindrance to individual freedom; one's opposition to them, however, need not be intransigent, but is conditioned by private convenience and interest. This account places Stirner at the antipodes to Hegel's idea of the state as an ethical community. It also underlines his distance from the republican model of political participation, at least by 1844. Leopold examines some important tensions in Stirner's depiction of social interaction among liberated egoists. The radical reduction of the social bond to contingent and momentary private interest places Stirner, in Leopold's reading, in sharp disagreement with Hegel.

Eric v.d. Luft discovers in the works of Edgar Bauer a still more obdurate form of opposition to constituted political and ecclesiastical authority. Luft describes Edgar as one of the originators of the modern theory of terrorism, as this pertains to acts by individuals or groups outside the state, rather than to systematic policies pursued by states themselves. Luft shows how, despite some superficial similarities to Hegel, this theory deviates from the Hegelian account of *Sittlichkeit* or ethical life. Logically, Edgar Bauer's terrorism replaces mediation or sublation with the

annihilation of opposites, while experientially, it replicates the theoretical movement of absolute freedom and terror that Hegel had traced in the *Phenomenology*, culminating in the destruction of the bonds of social life. Luft examines the relation of the Enlightenment dialectic of utility, as Hegel describes it, to the Jacobin Terror and the French Revolution, which Edgar Bauer seeks to emulate. He shows the abiding pertinence of Hegel's criticisms of this abstract form of emancipation from existing relations, not only as this process appears in Edgar Bauer, but also in its contemporary avatars. The freedom ensuing from the revolutionary dissolution of the traditional estate society remains amorphous unless it can be expressed through new structures of ethical life, which on this reading include faith as a necessary moment. Terrorism, in contrast, understands the freedom of the will exclusively in its negative connotation, as the ability to abstract or withdraw from any objective content, and to retreat into its own vacuous subjectivity. In holding to this account of abstract freedom, it rejects Hegel's concept of the free and infinite modern personality, which sanctions both the expansion of particularity and differentiation (the moment of analysis), and the return to unity or synthesis in intersubjectively valid political institutions.³³ In opposition to Edgar Bauer's repudiation of all religion as heteronomy, Luft's text raises the issue of the co-existence of faith and reason in modern ethical life, and discusses forms of their interaction.

According to Gareth Stedman Jones, the intersection of religious and social analysis is fundamental to the Left Hegelian project. The emergence of the social question, or of unprecedented forms of urban poverty and resistance, is linked in Engels' text *The Condition of the Working Class in England* to the onset of capitalism and industrialisation, but its depiction by Engels also reveals the abiding importance of religious thematics. Stedman Jones examines the sources for the catastrophic view of the Industrial Revolution in the work of the young Engels. He argues that this conception derives from an original combination of distinct perspectives. Underlying Engels' description of the squalor of modern industrial cities is a Feuerbachian narrative of alienation and redemption, itself a secularised Lutheranism whose elements are the crucifixion and resurrection, fulfilled by the Pentecostal indwelling of the spirit among the new community of the faithful. The current misery and dehumanisation of the proletariat is the result of egoism, and of the loss and suppression of species-consciousness or the general interest. In working out his account

³³ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, § 260, pp. 282–3.

of industrial society and its ills, Engels draws together two hitherto separate discourses, pauperism and industrialisation, and sees the latter as the cause of the former. The spread of urban poverty had previously been explained as largely politically conditioned, promoted by the abolition of the artisanal guilds, and by legally sanctioned changes in landholding, notably the enclosure of fields and the eviction of agricultural tenants, who sought refuge in the cities. In Adam Smith, Jean-Baptiste Say, and others, industrialisation and division of labour were held to be a solution, but not the source of the problem.³⁴ While he recognised the pervasiveness of poverty and unemployment in modern civil society, Hegel himself had offered a diagnosis different from Engels' (as Waszek also shows). Sismondi, whom Hegel may likely have read, had stressed the negative effects of mechanisation and unbridled competition, driving wages down to subsistence levels, and even below; what Hegel took from Sismondi was the need for the regulation of the market, but not a negative view of industrialisation. He continued to believe that the abolition of the guilds and corporations was the source of immiseration and of emergent mass society. Tomba's analysis of Bauer in this volume supports a similar conclusion, by tracing the consequences of the dissolution of the traditional social order of estates in the wake of the French Revolution. Underlying these processes for Hegel was the transition from feudal tenure to modern property. Stedman Jones shows how Engels' text imparts a sublime and dramatic cast to this transition, wherein degraded humanity reclaims its essence from false and perverted manifestations.

Andrew Chitty and José Crisóstomo de Souza see the early Marx as close to the spirit of Hegelianism. De Souza stresses the contrast between Marx (at least by 1845) and Feuerbach. His paper on Marx's retention of the idea of essence in the *German Ideology* sets up the opposition between Marx and Feuerbach as a debate within Hegelianism, despite the anti-speculative intentions of both parties. In characterising the human essence, Marx defends what we might call in Kantian terms the primacy of the rational concept over immediate intuition or perception. Here the focus is on the category of relation, and on essence, or the social bond, as a dynamic, interactive construction. Marx's charge against Feuerbach is that his passive materialism allows him to envisage only simple and external connection among persons, but not their determinate relations as agents in economic and social processes. Marx's position is thus still strongly marked by Hegel's logic of essence and the Kantian concept of

³⁴ Cf. Hont and Ignatieff, eds., "Introduction," *Wealth and Virtue*.

relation. One could extend the analysis to examine the dialectic of class formation that Marx proposes in the *German Ideology*: manifesting distinct Hegelian logical figures, the bourgeoisie appears as the many ones, retaining individual interests against other members of the same class, while the proletariat stands for the many coalesced as one, where common interest outweighs (apparent) private goods.³⁵ Following up this line of thought, Collins in her paper contests both liberal-instrumentalist and productivist readings of the social bond that Marx describes here. Collins finds resources for this alternative approach in Hegel himself, but Sean Sayers, linking Marx's concept of labour to the Kantian themes of spontaneity and self-determination, argues that the productivist reading does not do justice to the richness of Marx's own account.

Chitty's analysis of Marx in 1842 resembles de Souza's in identifying a dynamic common substrate of values and actions to which the political realm must give expression. Marx finds this not in the immediacy of nature, as Feuerbach does, but in shared understandings of freedom. Chitty suggests further that this (Hegelian) idea lies at the base of Marx's later construal of the social relations of production, as the foundation upon which the state rises. Chitty's argument recalls the classic analysis of the *Philosophy of Right* by Klaus Hartmann. On this reading, Hegel's text violates his own logical strictures; Hegelian logic contains a stipulation that is not fulfilled in the *Philosophy of Right*. As a gloss on this argument, we might add that if the late Marx appears to dissolve the universal into the particulars, Hegel can be accused of isolating and freezing the universal. For Hartmann, the logical requirement is that before assuming an explicit and determinate form, the sphere of the universal should emerge as an objective, but not fully conscious or articulated, common interest. This is not to be understood merely as an aggregate of private interests, as in liberalism, but as the implicit recognition of shared values, yielding a general interest that could, and should, have served as the foundation for a doctrine of popular sovereignty in Hegel's text. At first inchoate, this underlying sovereign will would then have to be articulated into a comprehensive set of political institutions, which would endow it with a determinate configuration, while being in essential unity with it.³⁶ Only then could a conscious universality emerge, as a state that is internally

³⁵ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "The German Ideology," *Collected Works*, vol. 5 (New York: International Publishers, 1976), 74–83; cf. G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 163–78.

³⁶ Klaus Hartmann, "Towards a New Systematic Reading of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*," in Z. A. Pelczynski, ed., *State and Civil Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 114–36.

connected to its members, and not a mere organ of coercion; but in the *Philosophy of Right*, Hartmann claims, Hegel fails to provide for this implicit universal. In describing the transition from civil society to the state, he misses a stage and resists the republican implications of his own thought. Chitty proposes a similar argument, seeing Marx as correcting Hegel's own defective logical procedure. Marx initially identifies the underlying inarticulate substance as the communal understanding of freedom and sees it as the essence of the state, which needs to be formalised and represented institutionally, in the republic. Subsequently, Marx replaces this underlying ideal substance with the idea of the ensemble of social relations of production, prefiguring his idea of a mode of production in his work of the later 1840s. The basis of the state, in the Marx of 1842, consists in a collective spirit that individuals create through mutual association. By participating in this active community, they realise the freedom that is intrinsic to their nature. This is a profoundly Hegelian claim.

In his analysis of the concept of labour, Sean Sayers argues that a marked Hegelian influence persists in Marx's mature thought. He disputes the idea that the later Marx renounces the emancipatory potential of labour in favour of a more positivistic account, wherein freedom would lie beyond the sphere of necessary work but could not be approximated within it. Sayers defends the early Marx against critics like Hannah Arendt and argues that Marx's account of social life cannot be reduced to a narrow conception of needs and material productivity. Labour is potentially expressive of freedom and creativity, and not simply the manifestation of need or necessity; it exemplifies pure as well as empirical practical reason. Marx's idea of labour in *Capital* and *Critique of the Gotha Programme* does not abandon, but enriches, this perspective. Sayers contends further that Marx's conception of the freedom to be attained in communist society, as outlined in his later writings, is a projection of the ideals of post-Kantian philosophy, spontaneous self-activity, and autonomy.

The final word in this volume is a defence of Hegel against his critics and his epigones. Ardis Collins responds to a number of criticisms of Hegelian modernity raised by papers in this collection, though her text is not intended as a systematic rejoinder to them. Drawing particularly on the *Phenomenology*, she defends the superiority of Hegel's account over the one-sidedness and partiality of his republican followers. Through a critical reading of Arendt, Marcuse, and other significant thinkers of the twentieth century, she emphasises Hegel's abiding importance for grasping the decisive issues of today, the reconciliation of subjective freedom

with life in an ethical community: the expansion and division of particularity, and its reflexive return to unity with other free subjectivities, in such a way that the social bond is experienced as an internal connection, and not as a coerced or merely instrumental linkage. This project is central to Hegel's account of the modern world, and a proper understanding of it is fundamental to assessing Hegel's relevance for our times. Besides engaging with the Hegelian left, Collins contests other, related interpretations, like that of Herbert Marcuse, according to whom Hegel conceives the strong state, on Hobbesian lines.³⁷ The state requires a power remote from the subjective impulses of its subjects if it is to exercise its function of containing the centrifugal forces of modern particularity. Marcuse in many ways encapsulates the Left Hegelian critique of the *Philosophy of Right*, with its inadequate republicanism, though he imparts to it a specifically Marxian coloration. In civil society, the seemingly individualised transactions of commercial exchange are organised as a system, but one in which universality appears only in the unconscious, coercive laws of the competitive market. It is in this form that Hegel understands the market when he looks to the state to limit and orient it (and, perhaps, to transform it),³⁸ but then he can no longer show how modern subjects' own strivings lead back to unity. Unity can be imposed only from above, violating the prescription of the free and infinite personality of modernity. The result would be that the spontaneity of subjects and the rationality of the political order are not fully coordinated, because Hegel views this spontaneity as liable to the heteronomous influences of property and possessive individualism. This might be the basis for the logical deficiency identified by Hartmann (and by Chitty in this collection). Responding to this reading, Collins indicates resources in Hegel's own work for challenging this interpretation and the externality of its proposed solution, and for rethinking the political as a genuinely universal sphere. Collins brings out the importance of Hegel's reflections on language, which have tended to be overlooked by other commentators,

³⁷ For anti-Hobbesian readings of Hegel, see Ludwig Siep, "Der Kampf um Anerkennung. Zu Hegels Auseinandersetzung mit Hobbes in den Jenaer Schriften," *Hegel-Studien* 9 (1974), 155–207; and Adriaan Peperzak, "Hegel and Hobbes Revisited," in Ardis B. Collins, *Hegel on the Modern World* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1995), 199–217.

³⁸ Remo Bodei, "Hegel e l'economia politica," in R. Bodei et al., *Hegel e l'economia politica* (Milan: Mazzotto, 1975), 29–77, esp. 59; Gillian Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology* (London: Athlone, 1981), 48ff., 80; H. S. Harris, "The Social Ideal of Hegel's Economic Theory," in L. S. Stepelevich and David Lamb, eds., *Hegel's Philosophy of Action* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1983), 49–74.

but which connect directly with current debates in various theoretical traditions.

It is of course a banality to observe that the experiences of the twentieth, and I would add the twenty-first, centuries have undermined the progressivism of the Enlightenment and its progeny, and eroded the Hegelian confidence in the efficacy of reason. The historical idealisms and materialisms originating in the 1830s and 1840s, as canvassed here, do not represent an easy and anodyne optimism, though critics have often unjustly caricatured in these terms Enlightenment thought and its aftermath. The texts in this volume show that the Left Hegelians devise theories of a freedom to be won through crisis and sublime struggle, sublime because the objective is remote, and the access to it demanding and difficult. While giving powerful formulation to many of the themes of modern subjectivity, they also issue a challenge to it, undermining the facile complacency and triumphalism of the market and of the end of history, and the claims to unprecedented newness trumpeted by the heralds of a postmodern condition. They theorise the “secularisation of complexity and ambiguity,” as Breckman puts it, and the difficult prospects of autonomy, mutual recognition, and community under specifically modern conditions. Their contribution to the task of establishing a more robust understanding of the modern self and its interactions, which can sustain both freedom and social solidarity, is the theme of the present collection.

Eduard Gans on Poverty and on the Constitutional Debate

Norbert Waszek

Eduard Gans (1797–1839) remains a somewhat neglected thinker, despite a recent revival of interest,¹ and although he was probably the most gifted and – in the few years that he outlived him – the most influential of Hegel’s immediate followers. It was Gans who was chosen to edit Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* (this implied the compilation of the famous ‘additions’ to the paragraphs of Hegel’s own texts on the basis of students’ notes) and the *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, for the collected works published under the direction of “a circle of friends of the deceased” between 1832 and 1845.² It was also Gans who was allowed

¹ Various editions of his work have been published in recent years: *Eduard Gans (1797–1839). Hegelianer – Jude – Europäer*, ed. N. Waszek (Frankfurt, Bern, New York: Peter Lang, 1991) [henceforth cited as Gans (1991)]; Eduard Gans, *Rückblicke auf Personen und Zustände*. A reprint of the 1836 edition, with introduction, notes, and bibliography, ed. N. Waszek (Stuttgart–Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1995) [henceforth cited as Gans: *Rückblicke*]; *Eduard Gans and the Hegelian Philosophy of Law*, ed. Michael H. Hoffheimer (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1995) [henceforth cited as Hoffheimer (1995)]. To these recent editions should be added the two older ones: Eduard Gans, *Philosophische Schriften*, ed. Horst Schröder (Glashütten im Taunus: Detlev Auverman, 1971) [henceforth cited as *GphS*]; Eduard Gans, *Naturrecht und Universalsrechtsgeschichte*, ed. Manfred Riedel (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981) [henceforth cited as *GNU*]. The numerous articles on Gans cannot all be quoted here (see the bibliography in Gans. *Rückblicke*, 435–47), but two book-length treatments should be mentioned: Johann Braun, *Judentum, Jurisprudenz und Philosophie* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1997) [henceforth cited as Braun, *Judentum*]; Eduard Gans (1797–1839). *Politischer Professor zwischen Restauration und Vormärz*, ed. Reinhard Blänkner, Gerhard Göhler, and N. Waszek (Leipzig: Universitätsverlag, 2002) [henceforth cited as Gans (2002)].

² The so-called ‘Freundesvereinsausgabe’: Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Werke*. Vollständige Ausgabe durch einen Verein von Freunden des Verewigten [these friends were, in alphabetical order: Friedrich Förster, Eduard Gans, Leopold von Henning,

to write Hegel's obituary in the official *Allgemeine Preussische Staatszeitung*.³ Gans was likewise originally designated to produce the quasi-official biography of Hegel, later (1844) executed by Karl Rosenkranz.⁴ Finally, it was Gans, too, who attracted the largest crowds,⁵ from among those eager to be introduced to Hegel's thought after the philosopher's death. In the astonishingly numerous audiences we find, among many others, David Friedrich Strauss, August von Cieszkowski, and Karl Marx – some of the most prominent figures of the rising generation of the time. Gans' widespread reputation as a brilliant expositor and populariser of Hegel – the poet Heine nicknamed Gans simply the “*Oberhegelianer*”⁶ – did, however, have a negative consequence. He was taken, for the most part, to be a mere follower. That misconception overshadowed Gans' more original contributions. In English-speaking countries in particular, the reception of Gans has been hindered by the formidable obstacle that his writings, with a very few exceptions, are not available in English translation.⁷ An English edition of a selection of his writings is long overdue.

Heinrich Gustav Hotho, Philipp Marheineke, Karl Ludwig Michelet, and Johannes Schulze – N.W.J. In 18 vols. (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1832–1845). Gans' editions were published in 1833 (*Philosophy of Right*) and in 1837 (*Philosophy of History*), respectively.

³ Eduard Gans, “Nekrolog” in *Allgemeine Preussische Staatszeitung*. Nr. 333 (December 1, 1831), p. 1751 f – now available in Gans (1991), pp. 102–6.

⁴ This is the biography that was conceived as a supplementary volume to the above-cited edition of Hegel's works (1832–45). Referring to it as “quasi-official” seems legitimate, for it was realised with the active support of Hegel's family and closest circle of friends. When he came to publish the biography, Rosenkranz explicitly recalls Gans in the context and regrets his untimely death: Karl Rosenkranz, *G.W.F. Hegels Leben* (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1844), xvi.

⁵ The historian of the University of Berlin, Max Lenz, who did not appreciate Gans, recorded nevertheless that, in 1831–2 and 1832–3, he had 800 to 900 regular students – at a time when the university had only around 2,000 registered students. Max Lenz, *Geschichte der Königlichen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Berlin*, 5 vols. (Halle: Waisenhaus, 1910–18), vol. II./1, 496.

⁶ *Heinrich Heine Säkularausgabe*, vol. 20: *Briefe 1815–1831*, ed. Fritz H. Eisner (Berlin and Paris: Akademie Verlag and CNRS, 1970), 273. On Heine and Gans, cf. S. S. Praver, *Heine's Jewish Comedy* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), 10–43; N. Waszek, “Aufklärung, Hegelianismus und Judentum im Lichte der Freundschaft von Heine und Gans,” in *Aufklärung und Skepsis*. Internationaler Heine-Kongress 1997, ed. Joseph A. Kruse, Bernd Witte, and Karin Füllner (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1998), 226–41.

⁷ Most prominently, among these exceptions, are Gans' additions (*Zusätze*) to Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, translated by T. M. Knox in his edition of Hegel's text (Oxford: Clarendon, 1942) [henceforth cited as *PhR*]. Likewise, Gans' preface to Hegel's *Philosophy of History* was translated by John Sibree in his edition of Hegel's text (London: H. G. Bohn, 1857), xii–xxiii; reprinted in Hoffheimer (1995), 97–106. Hoffheimer (1995), 54–86, 87–92, also translated Gans' *System of Roman Civil Law in Outline* [1827] and his preface to Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* [1833]. Extracts from Gans' Jewish writings were translated

Gans' originality, not only as a follower of Hegel but as a thinker in his own right, might be approached from a variety of angles. In the context of Judaic studies, his pioneering role in the beginnings of the modern, secular study of Judaism is well worth highlighting.⁸ In his own discipline, law, his influential masterwork on the history of the law of succession⁹ and his opposition to F. K. von Savigny (1779–1861, the leading figure of the so-called 'Historical School of Law') deserve careful attention.¹⁰ Most important for his contemporaries was Gans' original stand as an early type of 'political professor' who, in the absence of a Prussian parliament worthy of the name, used his professorial chair as a forum for political critique and debate.¹¹ An outstanding example of Gans' political engagement was his support for the so-called 'Göttinger Sieben', the seven professors of the University of Göttingen dismissed on political grounds by the Hanoverian government.¹² In this wider setting, the present article attempts to clarify Gans' contributions to two debates that are at the heart of his political thought, the one on poverty and the social question, the other on the constitutional issue. His ideas on these two

in *The Jew in the Modern World*, ed. Paul R. Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 188–93.

⁸ Cf. Hanns G. Reissner, *Eduard Gans. Ein Leben im Vormärz* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1965), 59–83 [henceforth cited as Reissner, *Gans*]; Michael A. Meyer, *The Origins of the Modern Jew. Jewish Identity and European Culture in Germany, 1749–1824* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1967, 1984), 162 ff. [henceforth Meyer, *Origins*]; and my own "'Wissenschaft und Liebe zu den Seinen'. Eduard Gans und die hegelianischen Ursprünge der 'Wissenschaft des Judenthums'" in Gans (2002), 71–103.

⁹ Eduard Gans, *Das Erbrecht in weltgeschichtlicher Entwicklung*, vol. I (Berlin: Mauer, 1824); vol. II (Berlin: Mauer, 1825); vol. III (Stuttgart and Tübingen: Cotta, 1829); vol. IV (Stuttgart and Tübingen: Cotta, 1835). Two further volumes were in preparation when Gans died in 1839.

¹⁰ Cf. H. Klenner and G. Oberkofler, "Zwei Savigny-Voten über Eduard Gans nebst Chronologie und Bibliographie," in *Topos*. 1 (1993), 123–48; Hoffheimer (1995), 1–47; Braun, *Judentum*, 75–143; and the contributions of J. Rückert, A. Bürge, and H. Mohnhaupt to Gans (2002), 247–311, 313–37, 339–66.

¹¹ Cf. Reinhard Blänkner's contribution to Gans (2002), 367–408, here 390–408 in particular.

¹² The background to this was the succession of Ernst August, in 1837, to the throne of Hanover. Ernst August declared that he did not consider himself bound by the constitution that his older brother, Wilhelm IV, had established in 1833. Seven professors of the University of Göttingen (Dahlmann, Ewald, Weber, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, Gervinus, and Albrecht) signed a note of protest against this breach of the constitution. They were dismissed immediately, and three of them (Dahlmann, J. Grimm, and Gervinus) were ordered to leave the kingdom of Hanover. Gans chaired a Berlin support group that collected funds for the dismissed professors; cf. Reissner, *Gans*, 155 f.; H. Lübke, *Politische Philosophie in Deutschland. Studien zu ihrer Geschichte*, 2nd edition (München: DTV, 1974), 53.

fields of inquiry may well be used to clarify his relation to Hegel – and some Hegel scholars have indeed called Gans' attitude a "liberalisation" of Hegel's political thought¹³ – yet to measure him exclusively in Hegelian terms and in comparison with Hegel would again restrict awareness of the originality of Gans' thinking. His options on both issues will show clearly that Gans went well beyond Hegel, and will reveal him as an innovative and creative mind. Given, however, the relative neglect of Gans, even in serious studies of the Young Hegelians,¹⁴ it may not be out of place here to begin with some biographical information.

1. EDUARD GANS' LIFE AND INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

It is worthwhile trying to interpret some of the facts of Gans' biography in detail,¹⁵ for the impact they have on his writing. Eduard Gans was born on March 23, 1797,¹⁶ in Berlin, and it seems beyond dispute that his Jewish origins were of fundamental significance for him. Gans as a Jew belonged to a minority in an "alien culture,"¹⁷ with all the drawbacks of the essentially marginal vision that stemmed from that situation.¹⁸ During his early years in Berlin, however, he was confident that a better understanding between the educated classes of the Jewish society to which he belonged and the Prussian state of the time, was well under way, because of the

¹³ E.g., Hans-Christian Lucas, "Dieses Zukünftige wollen wir mit Ehrfurcht begrüßen," in Gans (2002), 105–35.

¹⁴ But see Edda Magdanz, "Gans' Stellung im Konstituierungsprozess der junghegelianischen Bewegung," in Gans (2002), 177–206.

¹⁵ For fuller treatments of this subject, cf. my introductions to *Gans: Rückblicke* and to the abridged French edition of this text: Edouard Gans, *Chroniques françaises. un hégélien juif à Paris (1825, 1830, 1835)* (Paris: Cerf, 1993), 7–105. Reissner's *Gans*, the only book-length biography of Gans, remains fundamental, but it has to be complemented by articles on specific aspects of his life that have been published in the past forty years. In English, the best treatment is Hoffheimer's section on Gans' "Life and Career," Hoffheimer (1995), 1–9.

¹⁶ A number of older studies – for example, Hermann Lübke, "Eduard Gans," in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 6 (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1964), 63 – give 1798 as his year of birth, and it is true that Gans himself indicated the later date on several occasions. Reissner, *Gans*, 14 and 38, has explained why 1798 is unlikely, and also why Gans might still have used it.

¹⁷ Hoffheimer (1995), 1.

¹⁸ Cf. Friedrich Battenberg, *Das europäische Zeitalter der Juden. Zur Entwicklung einer Minderheit in der nichtjüdischen Umwelt Europas*. 2 vols. (Darmstadt: WBG, 1990). The marginal character of the German Jews of Gans' generation has been explored by research on Heine, born in the same year as Gans and a close friend of his, at least in their early years; cf. Gerhard Höhn, *Heine-Handbuch. Zeit-Person-Werk* (Stuttgart and Weimar: Metzler, 1997), 32 ff, 146 ff. (with rich indications to further studies).

force of Enlightenment values. Since the late eighteenth century, Berlin was becoming the centre of cultivated Jewish life in Germany.¹⁹ In particular, the literary salons that flourished in Berlin – on the initiative of a set of remarkable Jewish women – deserve the special attention they have received in recent scholarship.²⁰ These literary salons created important relations between Jews and liberal-minded civil servants, active in the Prussian reform movement. Emancipation of the Jews thus became, as Michael Meyer puts it, “an integral part of the overall plan of reform.”²¹ The Prussian edict of March 11, 1812, which declared the Prussian Jews citizens of that state, was a promising result of cooperation between the educated Jews and the best representatives of the reform movement, such as Hardenberg and Humboldt. Yet if Gans’ early years thus gave rise to prudent optimism, the harder to bear the disillusionment must have been, for him and his generation, when the Restoration put these advances once again into question. The deterioration of the wider political context of the Restoration touched Gans personally, a trauma that marked him permanently.

Gans’ family belonged, on both sides, to the upper class of the Jewish community in Northern Germany that provided banking services to the aristocracy.²² If this background made Gans’ family prosperous during Eduard’s childhood, his father’s sudden death in 1813, at a critical period because of the war against Napoleon, left his heirs and successor (Eduard was the oldest of four children) in difficulties. Debts and legal procedures overshadowed Eduard’s early manhood. It is tempting to see this background as one personal reason why the law of inheritance was Eduard’s favourite subject in his future work as a scholar of law.²³

¹⁹ While Meyer, *Origins*, 149, makes a passing remark about Berlin’s intellectual decline between the death of Frederick the Great (1786) and the foundation of the university (1810), most commentators underline the astonishing advances in the social situation and the cultural achievements of the Prussian Jews; cf. Steven Lowenstein, *The Berlin Jewish Community. Enlightenment, Family, Crisis, 1770–1830* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), Part II, chapters 3–5, pp. 25–54; Ludwig Geiger, *Geschichte der Juden in Berlin* (Berlin: Guttentag, 1871), vol. 1, Book III: “Innere Hebung und äussere Befreiung (1750–1812),” 57–145.

²⁰ Petra Wilhelmy, *Der Berliner Salon im 19. Jahrhundert (1780–1914)* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989); F. Battenberg (1990), vol. II, 81 ff.

²¹ Meyer, *Origins*, 79.

²² The members of this social group, who were not always allowed to call themselves “bankers,” are also known under the somewhat pejorative term of “court Jews”; cf. Francis Ludwig Carsten, “The Court Jew,” in *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, vol. III (1958), 140–56; Heinrich Schnee, *Das Hoffaktorentum in der deutschen Geschichte* (Göttingen: Musterschmidt, 1964).

²³ Reissner, *Eduard Gans*, 25.

A further question is the extent to which his Jewish origins implied any religious instruction. Because the biographical evidence is virtually silent on this matter, one might be tempted to identify Gans on this level with Heine and Marx – the implications would be that he had acquired very little Hebrew or Talmudic teaching as a boy, his family being too secular and “assimilated” to the Christian environment. But in his article on the law of succession according to the Jewish sources,²⁴ published in 1823, Gans displayed an intimate knowledge of rabbinical concepts, and of the Hebrew language, which would have required several years of study, and was to be obtained almost exclusively in a religious education. If Gans did later display indifference in religious matters – in startling contrast with Feuerbach, Heine, and Marx, who all considered the critique of religion of fundamental significance²⁵ – he cannot be accused of ignorance with regard to Judaism.

Gans studied in Berlin at a humanist high school (*Gymnasium*), with its characteristic emphasis on the ancient languages, history, and introduction to philosophy. It was at the young and rising University of Berlin (founded in 1810) that he began in 1816 to study law. As was customary among German students, Gans attended several universities before taking a degree. He continued his studies first in Göttingen, then in Heidelberg. These universities certainly ranked among the finest institutions of higher education in Germany – in particular regard to his field of law. Among his teachers were F. C. von Savigny (1779–1861) at Berlin, Gustav Hugo (1764–1844) at Göttingen, and A. F. J. Thibaut (1772–1840) at Heidelberg – all three outstanding scholars of international reputation and lasting influence. Gans was a brilliant student, completing his studies in 1819 with a doctorate *summa cum laude* at Heidelberg, under the direction of Thibaut,²⁶ who would soon become a loyal friend. Thibaut had recently won celebrity, well beyond the circle of law scholars,

²⁴ E. Gans, “Die Grundzüge des mosaisch-talmudischen Erbrechts,” in *Zeitschrift für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*. I (1823), 419–71; for an evaluation of Gans’ Hebrew scholarship; cf. Ismar Schorsch, “Breakthrough into the Past. The Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden,” in *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, 33 (1988), 26 and 28.

²⁵ The distinction between Gans on the one hand, and Heine and Marx on the other, on this issue, is developed in Myriam Bienenstock’s contribution, “Die ‘soziale Frage’ im französisch-deutschen Kulturaustausch: Gans, Marx und die deutsche Saint-Simonrezeption,” in Gans (2002), 154 ff.

²⁶ The doctoral dissertation, written in Latin, as was still the custom, examined an aspect of the Roman law of contracts, the law of forfeiture. A German version of the thesis was subsequently published under the title *Über römisches Obligationenrecht. insbesondere über die Lehre von den Innominalcontracten und dem Jus Poenitendi. Drei civilistische Abhandlungen* (Heidelberg: Mohr und Winter, 1819). See esp. pp. xii and 213.

by his contribution to the debate on the destiny of Napoleon's *code civil* in Germany, which was widely discussed after the emperor's military defeat.²⁷ Yet there was also a more practical reason for choosing Heidelberg: This university, as opposed to Berlin, did not refuse to grant doctorates to Jewish candidates.²⁸ Because Thibaut did not give way to the widespread anti-semitism of his time but had, on the contrary, gained a "reputation as a defender of Jewish emancipation,"²⁹ Gans' reasons for preparing his thesis with Thibaut at Heidelberg become obvious.

Gans could not attend Hegel's lectures at Heidelberg. Even their paths' having crossed in that city seems unlikely, because Hegel had already left Heidelberg for Berlin around September 18, 1818, and Gans seems to have arrived in Heidelberg only at the beginning of the same month. It does nevertheless appear that in Heidelberg Gans first became familiar with Hegel's philosophy, through professors who had been profoundly marked by it (e.g., Karl Daub) or who had at least been on friendly terms with Hegel (e.g., Thibaut and Creuzer). There was also the first group of students who had become enthusiastic disciples of Hegel (e.g., Carové and Hinrichs). Upon his return to Berlin, in the early summer of 1819, with the doctoral degree in hand, Gans began to study Hegel's writings seriously. His publications would soon testify to Hegel's lasting impact on his own thought, and he rapidly became one of the closest friends of the philosopher.³⁰ Gans was a familiar figure in Hegel's household, and from the rich collection of contemporary documents edited by G. Nicolin, one could reconstruct an impressive list of social and cultural events that they both attended.³¹ When Gans and Hegel were separated by absence from Berlin, they maintained a regular correspondence – although it seems that only a small proportion of their letters has survived. Hegel's letters to third persons also document how close he felt to Gans. The

²⁷ Thibaut's powerful tract – *Ueber die Nothwendigkeit eines allgemeinen bürgerlichen Rechts für Deutschland* [On the Necessity of Universal Civil Law for Germany] (Heidelberg: Mohr und Zimmer, 1814), p. 67 – launched this wide debate.

²⁸ For the details see Monika Richarz, *Der Eintritt der Juden in die akademischen Berufe* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1974), 99 and 110.

²⁹ John E. Toews, *Hegelianism. The Path Toward Dialectical Humanism, 1805–1841* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 110.

³⁰ As in any friendship, occasional frictions might have arisen between the two men, but certain accounts of a row in 1831 have been largely exaggerated; cf. for example Arnold Ruge, *Aus früher Zeit*. 4 vols. (Berlin: Duncker, 1862–7), vol. 4, 431 ff.; but see *Gans: Rückblicke*, xl.

³¹ *Hegel in Berichten seiner Zeitgenossen*, ed. Günther Nicolin (Hamburg: Meiner, 1970). See, for example, 296, 344, 448.

most telling of these is perhaps a letter to his wife, temporarily absent from Berlin: "I am living very quietly and see almost no one but Gans, my loyal friend and companion."³² But the most convincing evidence of the close cooperation between Hegel and Gans was the creation and subsequent direction of the journal *Jahrbücher für wissenschaftliche Kritik* (1826–46), a powerful tool of the wide cultural politics of Hegel and his school.³³

In the early 1820s, the Jewish question became a real and personal problem for Gans.³⁴ Returning to Berlin from Heidelberg, Gans qualified himself further with scholarly publications. He applied for the *facultas docendi*, or university teaching licence, in order to be able to present himself for regular teaching posts in the Prussian universities. The above-mentioned edict of 1812 clearly seemed to open this perspective to Jewish candidates, but it contained an unresolved contradiction: While it did open the teaching profession to sufficiently qualified Jews (§ 8), it still excluded them from other governmental and administrative functions (§ 9). Because the chairs of law performed a certain function in the legal system – the law professors were members of a consulting board (*Spruchkollegium*) to which the courts of justice could turn in cases that presented particular difficulties – the contradiction became obvious. The Berlin law faculty, dominated by the conservative F. C. von Savigny, used this contradiction to block Gans' application. The faculty declared itself incompetent and turned to the king for a decision on the matter. Because the wider political context had dramatically changed since 1812 – almost all the leading representatives of the Prussian Reform movement had been evicted from their positions, and Prussia was well into the period of Restoration – his verdict could easily be foreseen. In a royal decree of August 18, 1822, Friedrich Wilhelm III "interpreted" the edict of 1812 – since the decree mentioned Gans explicitly, it became known as *Lex Gans* – in an extremely restrictive manner, barring all Jewish applicants from positions in the law faculties of Prussian universities. This decision shattered Gans' previous optimism and drove him to despair. He finished the first two volumes of his masterwork on the history of the law of succession, left

³² Hegel, "Letter to his wife (August 17, 1826)" in *Hegel. The Letters*, trans. and ed. Clark Butler and Christiane Seiler (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 506.

³³ Cf. *Gans: Rückblicke*, lxxi–lxxii, 215–56, 405–17; *Die Jahrbücher für wissenschaftliche Kritik*. *Hegels Berliner Gegenakademie*, ed. Ch. Jamme (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1994).

³⁴ For further details on this, see Reissner, *Gans*, 46–9, 55–7, 65 f, 91–3 and Braun, *Judentum*, 46–74.

Prussia in disgust in 1825, and turned to France, no doubt in the hope of finding a suitable position there. When this project also failed, he took the painful decision to convert to Protestantism in late 1825. Having thus removed legal obstacles that were certainly inspired by anti-semitism, he was made associate professor of law at the University of Berlin in 1826. In 1828, he was promoted to a chair and became one of the most successful academic teachers of his time.

Gans (and Hegel) rejoiced, for this nomination was quite a victory, allowing Gans to become an effective opponent of the reactionary tendencies then widespread in Prussia. His efficiency in this field is well illustrated by his influential stand on the two crucial issues presented below. The price to be paid for this victory was, however, considerable: In order to be able to fulfill his destiny as a scholar and political professor, Gans had to accept religious conversion. This, and the humiliation it implied, marked him for life, contributing to an enduring unhappiness. His death from apoplexy, in 1839, at the age of forty-two, was likely related to these events. The bulimia that provoked the stroke might well be interpreted as a slow suicide. Seen in this light, it is very sad that the conversion proved a lasting obstacle to a Jewish reception of Gans' ideas. To attribute Gans' conversion to "careerist reasons"³⁵ seems highly unjust, for to be a philosopher is more of a calling than a career. The rejection of converts such as Gans often implies a deficiency in historical awareness: It is all too easy for later generations, to whom the doors that Gans found firmly locked had been opened, to condemn as "opportunism" a decision compelled by moral considerations during dark times they were not forced to live through.

A final point of Gans' biography is his role as a mediator between the cultural and political life of France and Germany. When Gans was in France, for much of 1825, and on several later occasions, he promoted Hegel's philosophy in that country. During these visits, although his efforts to integrate professionally failed, he acquired an intimate knowledge and became an ardent advocate of French ideas and institutions that must have appeared progressive in comparison with conditions in Prussia and in other German territories. Back in Berlin, Gans represented and propagated these French achievements in such a manner as to lead a well-informed observer, K. A. Varnhagen, to declare that with Gans' death the French spirit had lost its leading German spokesman.³⁶

³⁵ Lowenstein, *The Berlin Jewish Community*, 126.

³⁶ K. A. Varnhagen [Note in his diary, May 5, 1839], quoted from Gans (1991), 183.

II. GANS ON POVERTY

Our intention here is to examine Gans' responses³⁷ to one of the most striking problems discussed in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* – namely, the urgent question of how “to check excessive poverty” (*PhR* § 245).³⁸ What can be done about those who lose “the broader freedoms and . . . the intellectual benefits of civil society” (*PhR*, § 243)? His answer to these questions allows an appreciation of one of Gans' original achievements and touches upon social problems that are still with us today. Because Gans' answer to Hegel's question not only matured over time but also reveals a significant distinction between a pre- and a post-1830 period, the following analysis of his responses proceeds in two steps.³⁹

II.1

In his natural law lectures of 1828–9 (*GPhS*, pp. 37–154), Gans still follows Hegel's views on poverty quite closely. With regard to the origins of poverty, Gans, like Hegel, discusses what we might call subjective and objective causes. From the subjective point of view, it is due to “*Unglück*” (misfortune) or “*Schuld*” (in criminal law, “guilt”; in civil law, “fault” or “responsibility”) when a member of civil society is reduced to poverty (*GPhS*, p. 120). Both ways of accounting for an individual's decline are derived from Hegel. Gans applies the legal term “*Schuld*” to the behaviour of those, in Hegel's formulation, “whose extravagance destroys the security of their own or their families' subsistence” (*PhR*, § 240, p. 148). In other words, Hegel and Gans are thinking of the arbitrary caprice of wastrels who not only ruin themselves, but put the future of their offspring at risk. When Gans speaks of “misfortune” he is alluding to what Hegel called the “contingencies” of health, skill, and so on (*PhR*, § 237, p. 148) determined, in turn, by different “natural, bodily, and mental

³⁷ This part of my article uses material previously published in *The Owl of Minerva*, 18/2 (1987), 167–78. The editor's permission is gratefully acknowledged.

³⁸ Hegel's own views on poverty have remained a bone of contention among scholars. Even such a sympathetic interpreter of Hegel as Shlomo Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 147–54, has found certain aspects of Hegel's treatment unsatisfactory. One of the more enigmatic passages of Hegel's discussion (*PhR*, § 245) is elucidated in my article “Hegels schottische Bettler,” in *Hegel-Studien*, 19 (1984), 311–16.

³⁹ Unless otherwise indicated, the translations of quotations of Gans provided in the footnotes are my own.

characteristics" (*PhR*, § 200, p. 130), and also by the "arbitrariness and accident" (*ibid.*) of "external circumstances" (*PhR*, § 241, p. 148) to which the above-mentioned physical conditions are subjected in civil society. These subjective causes may explain why certain individuals are impoverished while others flourish; but the social existence of poverty, as is already indicated by the "external circumstances" that have just been mentioned, has a further objective cause: the inevitability of an antagonism between rich and poor. What is "misfortune" to any individual is yet a matter of necessity on the social level, "for poverty is the shadow of wealth. Extreme wealth will create extreme poverty."⁴⁰

When Gans turns to the possible remedies – of course, like Hegel, he thought it necessary to intervene on behalf of the poor – he discusses the same measures as Hegel, though in a slightly altered succession.⁴¹ Hegel's first type of measure, which he calls "subjective aid" (*PhR*, § 242, p. 149), Gans refers to as "almsgiving and charitable gifts" (*GPhS*, p. 120). As subjective aid, "both in itself and in its operation, is dependent on contingency," Hegel thought it desirable "to make it less necessary, by discovering . . . general means of its [i.e., penury's] relief, and by organising relief accordingly" (*PhR*, § 242, p. 149). The first example of such publicly organised or state-controlled poor relief that Hegel mentions is briefly formulated and remains somewhat vague: "the burden of maintaining them [i.e., the masses who decline into poverty] at their ordinary standard of living might be directly laid on the wealthier classes . . ." (*PhR*, § 245, p. 150). Gans makes this proposal more precise by outlining a local tax, best described as a secular version of the British poor-rates.⁴² Gans ascribes a further task, not mentioned by Hegel, to the functionaries of the public poor relief (*Armenpolizei*): They ought to keep a check on private almsgiving in order to prevent begging from becoming an organised and profitable trade.⁴³

The second example of organised poor relief that Hegel discusses is of giving the poor "subsistence indirectly through being given work, i.e., the opportunity to work" (*PhR*, § 245, p. 150). As is well known, Hegel is critical of both options – a tax to assist the poor "would violate the principle of civil society and the feeling of individual independence and self-respect in its individual members"; the creation of jobs is unable to solve the

⁴⁰ *GPhS*, 120 – cf. *PhR*, §§ 195 and 243; pp. 128 and 149 ff.

⁴¹ Gans begins with taxes and then moves on to private charity.

⁴² *GPhS*, 120. I apply the qualifying phrase "secular version," as churchwardens normally levied the English poor-rates.

⁴³ Gans appears to be thinking of a scenario comparable to that in Bertolt Brecht's *Three-penny Opera*.

fundamental problem that he conceived to be one of overproduction⁴⁴ – and thus suggests colonisation, which would at once remove surplus labour and create new markets. Gans echoes this job creation scheme, with the slight modification that he seems to consider it a *future* option, in contrast with taxes and almsgiving, which have been tried *already*. One is tempted to regard this modification as a step towards the solution later advocated by Keynesian welfare economics – that is, the creation of jobs unrelated to the production of consumer goods. At any rate, Gans repeats in the end Hegel's skepticism and likewise turns to colonisation as the only alternative left open:

Civil society will never be so rich as [to be able] to abolish the poor. Civil society cannot feed all its poor. In the end, the country is not rich enough to feed infinite poverty. Therefore, many people will emigrate. [...] Emigration is not good when it removes too many people. However, this will rarely happen.⁴⁵

To sum up, with a few additions and modifications, Gans' 1828–9 lectures offer little more on the subject of poverty than an accurate exposition of Hegel's own views.

II.2

In the 1832–3 lectures (*GNU*), Gans questions what he had hitherto taken for granted and adds a significant reference to Saint-Simon and his followers:

Does the rabble have to remain? Is it a necessary existence? In this respect, I follow the opinion of the [Saint-]Simonians who alone are right in this matter [...] The rabble] is a fact but no right. It has to be possible to get to the causes of the fact and remove them.⁴⁶

Following Hegel, Gans had previously accepted that civil society would inevitably lead to class antagonism, which private charity and the “police” would have to mitigate, and which colonisation might to some extent remove. On the authority of Saint-Simon and his disciples, this process has now become problematic for Gans, and he at least hopes that a solution to the problem might be found *before* things come to the crunch. The position that Gans takes at this crucial point marks the beginning of a new

⁴⁴ *PhR*, § 245, p. 150. Hegel discusses the problem of overproduction at greater length in his 1824–5 lectures; cf. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Rechtsphilosophie*, 4 vols., ed. Karl-Heinz Ilting (Stuttgart–Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1974), vol. 4, 611 ff.

⁴⁵ *GPhS*, 120 f.

⁴⁶ *GNU*, 92.

awareness of the “social question” (*soziale Frage*) among Hegel’s school.⁴⁷ This hope of finding a better solution to the problem of poverty has a programmatic edge that must have been a trumpet call to Gans’ students, among whom was a young law student by the name of Marx.⁴⁸

At this point, two sets of questions call for attention: (a) When did Gans change his mind on this important issue and what made him do so? and (b) What did Gans take the tenets of the Saint-Simonians to be, and to what extent was he prepared to accept them?

With regard to the first question, the 1832–3 lectures can give us little assistance. Fortunately, there is other evidence to guide us in the matter, namely, an autobiographical essay entitled “Paris im Jahre 1830.”⁴⁹ Shortly after the end of the summer term in that year, Gans paid one of his frequent visits to the French capital,⁵⁰ in this case, no doubt, motivated by his desire to acquire first-hand knowledge of the consequences of the July Revolution.⁵¹ In general, Gans’ essay records his impressions and activities in Paris. With respect to the question presently under consideration, the essay states clearly that, during his 1830 visit, Gans for the first time gained intimate insights, as opposed to results of mere hearsay, into the ideas of Saint-Simon and his school.⁵² The essay then proceeds to give a detailed ten-page account of these ideas and of the practical efforts through which the adherents of that school tried to further those ideas. The origins of Saint-Simonian influences on Gans are thus established. However, Gans’ exposition of the theory and practice of the Saint-Simonian movement, as we shall show presently, was by no means uncritical: His own account disapproves of much of what he learned at the time. Yet, to quote Gans’ own formulation:

amidst these intellectual confusions, the Saint-Simonians have said something great and have put their finger on an open wound of the age. [. . .] that the state has to care for the poorest and most numerous class; that, if it [i.e., this class] is willing to work, it must never lack suitable employment in order to reduce that crust of civil society which is commonly called rabble; [all] this is a deep insight

⁴⁷ Cf. the convincing analysis of H. Lübke (1974), pp. 71 ff.

⁴⁸ Marx attended two of Gans’ lecture courses: criminal law in the winter term 1836–7; Prussian federal law (*Landrecht*) in the summer of 1838. Cf. Franz Mehring, *Karl Marx. Geschichte seines Lebens* [1918] (Berlin: Dietz, 1960), 16; August Cornu, *Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels, Leben und Werk*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Aufbau, 1954 and 1962), vol. 1, 81; Reissner, *Gans*, 157 ff.

⁴⁹ This essay was published in the autobiographical collection *Gans. Rückblicke*, 48–106.

⁵⁰ Reissner, *Gans*, 139 ff.

⁵¹ See “Gans’ letter to Hegel, dated August 5, 1830,” in *Briefe von und an Hegel*, 4 vols., ed. Johannes Hoffmeister, 3rd ed. (Hamburg: Meiner, 1969), vol. 3, 310 f.

⁵² *Gans. Rückblicke*, 91 f.

into our time and the pages of future history will have to speak more than once of the fight of the proletariat against the middling classes of society.⁵³

What, then, amidst all the “intellectual confusions” (*Gedankenwirren*) of the Saint-Simonians, led Gans to single out for approval how that school dealt with the issue of poverty? What made him use the language of class struggle, thus almost compromising his Hegelian heritage and anticipating the radicalism of a later date? The 1832–3 lectures and the autobiographical essay provide us with a clue to answer that question. In both cases, while he discusses the opinions of the Saint-Simonians, he turns for illustration and support of their views not to contemporary French society but to *English* conditions and circumstances.⁵⁴ At first glance, this might be taken as yet another echo of Hegel, who in the same context had also drawn attention to the example of Britain, as an advance laboratory for all issues related to industry and society; and had shown himself to be remarkably well informed.⁵⁵ And yet, a consideration of one of Gans’ formulations reveals more than a knowledge derived from books and periodicals:

One ought to visit the factories of England, where one will find hundreds of men and women who, emaciated and wretched, sacrifice their health and enjoyment of their lives to the service of a single [person] and for no other reward than scanty self-preservation⁵⁶

The indignation and authoritative tone seem to indicate that Gans speaks from personal observation. Moreover, the biographical research of H. G. Reissner provides evidence to support this assumption: During the same 1830 holiday that took him to Paris, and again in 1831, Gans crossed the Channel to study British conditions in person.⁵⁷ The intellectual influence of Saint-Simon’s school and the first-hand knowledge of contemporary industrial England thus complemented each other in Gans’ mind and induced or provoked him to a new and more emotional response to the urgent social problems of his age.

In this manner, then, we can understand how Gans’ indignation about the plight of the poor reached a climax, and how his sympathy with

⁵³ *Gans. Rückblicke*, 99 ff.

⁵⁴ Cf. *GNU*, 92; *Gans. Rückblicke*, 100.

⁵⁵ *PhR*, § 245, p. 150. I have frequently commented on Hegel’s British sources, for example: “Hegels Schottische Bettler,” 311–16; “Hegels Exzerpte aus der *Edinburgh Review*, 1817–1819” and “A Stage in the Development of Hegel’s Theory of the Modern State: The 1802 Excerpts on Bonaparte and Fox,” both in *Hegel-Studien*, 20 (1985), 79–112 and 163–72.

⁵⁶ *Gans. Rückblicke*, 100.

⁵⁷ Reissner, *Gans*, 140, 147.

the followers of Saint-Simon was aroused. It remains to be discussed, however, what Gans perceived to be so original and commendable in the Saint-Simonians' approach and to what extent he thought it wise to adopt their proposed remedies. The unique cure that, according to Gans, the Saint-Simonians possessed for the ills of society was their theory of association:

The Middle Ages with their guilds had an organic institution for labour. The guilds are destroyed and can never be rebuilt. But shall released labour now decline from [mediaeval] corporation into despotism, from the domination of the masters [of trade] into the domination of the factory owner? Is there no cure for it? Indeed, there is. It is the free corporation, it is "association" [or "socialisation"].⁵⁸

But it is difficult to define what exactly Gans takes this *Vergesellschaftung* to be: He does not quote from or refer to any specific work of Saint-Simon; indeed, he normally speaks of the "Saint-Simonians," the "disciples of Saint-Simon," and so on, which seems to direct attention to sources different from the writings of Saint-Simon himself. Among the followers of Saint-Simon, Gans had personal contact with Jules Lechevalier (1800–50) and Jean-Louis-Eugène Lerminier (1803–57).⁵⁹ He also mentions Michel Chevalier (1806–79) in his essay, and Barthélemy-Prosper Enfantin (1796–1864) in the 1832–3 lectures.⁶⁰ But it is unnecessary to speculate further about the sources and exact nature of the influence of Saint-Simonian 'associationism' on Gans, as his interpretation of *Vergesellschaftung* can be derived from his own criticisms of that theory. In this light, it appears that Gans perceived the Saint-Simonians' "association" in analogy with a stock corporation of which the workers were supposed to be the stockholders. Although the workers were said to *possess* the stocks, they were not granted full discretionary powers of disposition. The term 'possession', Gans surmises, was used in a metaphorical sense, in the way that a colonel can be said to "possess" the regiment (*GNU*, p. 52). Just like the colonel who has a certain amount of power of disposition over the regiment and yet has to employ it for prescribed purposes, the workers have to employ the resources of their stock corporation on behalf of the common good and distribute the dividends justly in accordance with the capacity (*Fähigkeit*) of each recipient.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Gans. *Rückblicke*, 100 ff.

⁵⁹ Gans. *Rückblicke*, 91, 94.

⁶⁰ Gans. *Rückblicke*, 97; *GNU*, 52. Enfantin might have been the most important source for Gans, as this author put particular emphasis on associations; cf. his contributions to the journal *Le Producteur* (1825–6).

⁶¹ Gans. *Rückblicke*, 97.

Gans was not prepared to accept this lack of conceptual clarity. To begin with, he applies a scathing irony to this implication of associationism: With a sideswipe at the semi-religious or pseudo-religious tenets of the Saint-Simonians, he suggests that they should enter big business as “God and Partner, Ltd.” (*GNU*, p. 51). With regard to the substance of the argument, as both a Hegelian and a leading expert in civil law, Gans’ criticism was that private property in any stringent sense, as well as the law of descent (his favourite legal subject), had been ousted in the Saint-Simonian system:

The principal fault of Saint-Simonianism is that it intended to remove pure human institutions. Every man is twofold: he has himself, he thinks himself, he can kill himself [probably an allusion to Saint-Simon’s attempted suicide – N.W.], and he has property too, not as something external but as his own self. It is equally unreasonable to do away with the law of descent, for it is the only moral side of property. Through the law of descent, property, which would otherwise remain formal becomes ethical. It is because of the law of descent that we acquire property. It is for the sake of the family.⁶²

They [the Saint-Simonians] have attempted to exclude all chance and all ownership that emerges by chance and they have not realised that the same [chance] nevertheless slips back in again by the door one intended to lock against it. Because, even when capacity is the ultimate bearer of the means of happiness, where is the measure of capacity? Would not favour and aversion, passion and human inclination, which cannot be banished, err in the evaluation of capacity? [Doing away with] Property, which by the authority of the state individuals are supposed to enjoy only according to their capacity, and the law of descent, which is omitted by this definition, will also take away from the individual the basis of individuality and particularity. With the omission of the law of descent even the moral side of property will be lost, which property cannot do without. Will people who hardly know their children and do not work for them be as industrious and diligent as those who perceive a future for themselves even beyond their own existence?⁶³

Having thus thoroughly cleared out all of the collectivist implications and overtones of associationism, what aspect of it remains valuable for Gans? To this question, his discussion of the contemporary French prohibition of any association of workers⁶⁴ seems to reveal an answer. When Gans writes in this context about the “cruel” (*grausam*) “recent” (*in der neueren Zeit*) measures by which such associations were made illegal in France, he is alluding to a whole series of laws, initiated by the notorious Le Chapelier Law, which, though it did not explicitly use that term,

⁶² *GNU*, 52.

⁶³ *Gans. Rückblicke*, 97 f.

⁶⁴ *Gans. Rückblicke*, 101; cf. *GNU*, 93.

effectively barred *associations*, coalitions, and “seditious assemblies” (*attroupements séditieux*) of “citizens of the same trade or profession,” in general, and of “workers and journeymen” in particular.⁶⁵ Not only did much of this law remain in force until 1884, but its effects were even aggravated on several occasions, notably by Napoleon’s code of criminal law (*Code pénal* de 1810, art. 291–4), which (together with the law of April 10, 1834) declared all “associations” illegal, unless they had previously been authorised by the government; in other words, mere membership in such an association had become a crime (*délit d’association*). With his keen interest in any question on the borderline of law, politics, and society, Gans, it is safe to assume, knew these details well. In his criticism of the prohibition of associations, “[By the prohibition of associations] it is left to the factory owners to fix the wage scale and the reciprocity of participation is destroyed,”⁶⁶ we find him alluding to a specific rule of the Le Chapelier Law⁶⁷ but also defining, implicitly but quite clearly, the positive role that he hoped such associations would play in the future: What Gans has in mind when he speaks of “reciprocity” and “participation” with regard to “wages” seems nothing less than a trade union entitled to collective bargaining and agreement. His aim is twofold: to improve the material conditions of the poor by means of an institution that by effective participation would be strong enough to replace previous domination; and to raise an atomised “rabble” to be an organic part of the ethical life of the state.

II.3

Up to 1830, it may be concluded, Gans presented Hegel’s views on poverty more or less faithfully and, it appears, without significant uneasiness. After that date, his own observations of early industrial England, and his acquaintance with the new analytical tools of Saint-Simonianism capable of illuminating the empirical data of the social problem, cast considerable doubt on Gans’ earlier confidence. The plight of the poor at the bottom end of industrial society had now become a much more pressing and

⁶⁵ The law bears the name of Isaac Le Chapelier (1754–94) who, as deputy for Rennes, had introduced the measure in the National Assembly. It was enacted into law on June 14, 1791. An English translation of this law is to be found in John H. Stewart, *A Documentary Survey of the French Revolution* (New York: Macmillan, 1951), 165 f.

⁶⁶ Gans. *Rückblicke*, 101.

⁶⁷ According to the Le Chapelier Law, article 4: “It is contrary to the principles of liberty and the Constitution for citizens with the same professions, arts, or trades to deliberate or make agreements among themselves designed to set prices for their industry or their labour.”

much more painful problem in the eyes of Gans. He was then prepared to examine the Saint-Simonian theories of association with an open mind, except for the collectivist implications that might here and there have gone into them. Indeed, Hegel's conception of property, reinforced by his own meticulous research into the law of descent, prevented Gans from accepting any ideal of communal ownership, an aspect that marks the line between Gans and his more radical successors: Ruge, Marx, et al. No doubt, those on the other side of the rift might be tempted to attack Gans for being a half-hearted liberal with no serious desire for change. But, on the personal side, his opponents ought to consider that various biographical details show clearly how genuine Gans' exertions on behalf of the poor really were.⁶⁸ On the systematic, universal side of his argument, Gans, combining Hegelian and Saint-Simonian elements, was capable of anticipating a proto-unionist perspective. While preserving the crucial educational function of Hegel's corporation – the purpose of Gans' *Vergesellschaftung* or free corporation is not restricted to material living conditions, but, like Hegel's, it attempts to extend *Sittlichkeit* or "ethical life" to the insulted and injured – Gans clearly went beyond the uneasy balance of Hegel's corporate doctrine (no longer a medieval guild, but not yet a modern trade union) as far as to tip the scale decidedly towards the modern union. Thus, Gans' response to the problem of poverty contains a conception more explicitly modern than was Hegel's.

III. GANS' OPTION IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL DEBATE

To the ambivalences of Prussian political life⁶⁹ – the achievements of the great Reforms on the one hand, the setbacks associated with the

⁶⁸ As a boy, Gans used to pick up begging children in the streets of Berlin, take them to his parents' house, and insist that his mother feed them; cf. K. A. Varnhagen von Ense, *Tagebücher*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1861), 129. As a professor, while he was struggling to pay off the debts his father had left him, Gans broke a convention of his faculty by offering all needy students an exemption from tuition fees; cf. W. Sange, "Eduard Gans," in *Archiv für Rechts- und Wirtschaftsphilosophie*, 7 (1913–14), 582.

⁶⁹ For this period of Prussian history, see the crucial studies by Reinhart Koselleck, *Preussen zwischen Reform und Revolution. Allgemeines Landrecht, Verwaltung und soziale Bewegung* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1967); "Staat und Gesellschaft in Preussen 1815–1848," in *Moderne deutsche Sozialgeschichte*, ed. H.-U. Wehler, sixth edition (Königstein and Düsseldorf: Athenäum, 1981), 55–84. For Hegel's relation to contemporary Prussia, cf. the contributions of Rolf Grawert, Otto Pöggeler, and Wolfgang Bonsiepen to *Hegels Rechtsphilosophie im Zusammenhang der europäischen Verfassungsgeschichte*, ed. Hans-Christian Lucas and Otto Pöggeler (Stuttgart–Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1986) [henceforth: Lucas & Pöggeler (1986)].

Restoration on the other – Hegel himself responded by embracing what had been achieved and by promoting what he considered to be in line with reason, but which was as yet unrealised. In the decades after his death, the setbacks came to be more and more pronounced. Between the consciousness of freedom and the realisation of freedom, to use Hegel's own terms, a widening gap emerged. Hegel's school,⁷⁰ of which Gans was a foremost representative during the 1830s, was thus confronted with adverse political circumstances, and to the Hegelians one issue illustrated the ambivalences of Prussian political life more than anything else: Prussia's constitutional debate.

The historical background of the constitutional debate is well known: Friedrich Wilhelm III had promised to give Prussia a constitution and thus to initiate a constitutional monarchy, but he never fulfilled that promise. Hegel's own response to this situation had been somewhat ambivalent: On the one hand, he had considered the constitutional monarchy to be in accordance with his time, to be in line with reason; yet, on the other hand, and as against the political options one might have anticipated on this basis, his attitude had remained one of patience and passive expectation. This ambivalence was rooted in Hegel's conviction that contemporary Prussia was close to reconciling the consciousness and the realisation of freedom; he thought political freedom to be immanently given and its explicit realisation – that is, the fulfilment of the constitutional promise – to be near at hand. But, as time went by after the philosopher's death, it became increasingly difficult for Hegel's disciples to maintain his attitude. Thus, in commenting on constitutional matters, Gans bravely enters a controversial area of great political relevance. How, then, did Gans interpret and elaborate Hegel's views on constitutional freedom? For an answer to this question, we must turn to the following three texts: (a) his editorial preface to Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* (see notes 2 and 7); (b) his regularly delivered lecture course on *Naturrecht und Universalrechtsgeschichte* (GNU: "natural law and universal legal history"); and (c) the last issue of Gans' periodical, *Beiträge zur Revision der Preussischen Gesetzgebung* ("Contributions to the Revision of Prussian Legislation," Berlin 1830–2).

⁷⁰ Among the numerous surveys of Hegel's school, see Jürgen Gebhardt, *Politik und Eschatologie. Studien zur Geschichte der Hegelschen Schule in den Jahren 1830–1840* (München: Beck, 1963); H. Lübke (1974), 27–82; Toews, *Hegelianism*; N. Waszek, "Die Hegelsche Schule," in *Pipers Handbuch der Politischen Ideen*, 5 vols., ed. Herfried Münkler and Iring Fetscher, vol. 4 (München and Zürich: Piper, 1986), 232–46, 252–4.

The first observation to be made on these texts is that Gans constantly endeavours to show that Hegel was a forward-looking and progressive thinker. In his editorial preface, for example, he draws attention to those aspects of Hegel's rational state that remained unrealised in contemporary Prussia – for example, trials by jury, as well as public access to court proceedings and to the debates of the estates (*Ständeverhandlungen*) – and he insists that Hegel upheld these aspects in a 'difficult time', no doubt an allusion to, and an implicit criticism of, the Restoration.

Gans does not, however, confine himself to the interpretation of Hegel as a progressive thinker. Events themselves soon prevented him from upholding, by whatever interpretation, any case based on Hegel's confidence in Prussia's political development. He could not but take a more decisive stand than Hegel had done. For, as time passed, the king's unwillingness to fulfil his promise of a constitution became more and more obvious. As a consequence, it became more and more difficult for Hegel's disciples to maintain the attitude that H. Lübke calls "relative political reconciliation."⁷¹ Whether they liked it or not, they had to associate themselves, almost inevitably, with the political opposition to the Prussian status quo.⁷²

Gans' response is representative of this gradual shift, although, in the end, he opted for opposition more decisively than others did, going to the very limits of what caution would allow. In his lectures of 1828–9 (*GPhS*, pp. 37–154), Gans introduces a 'theory of opposition' (*Lehre von der Opposition*; *GPhS*, pp. 135–7).⁷³ He begins this part of his lecture course by showing that an opposition, far from being merely accidental

⁷¹ H. Lübke (1974), 93.

⁷² Otto Pöggeler has used the examples of von Griesheim and von Henning, in his article "Hegels Begegnung mit Preussen," in Lucas & Pöggeler (1986), 332 f., to show that there were some disciples of Hegel who accommodated themselves to the Restoration. While this is not contested, it needs to be added that these were comparatively minor figures within Hegel's school: von Griesheim was simply one of the many students who attended Hegel's lectures; even von Henning, who had at one time been close to Hegel, was no match for Gans, in talent, achievement, or influence. Thus, I would argue, a cautious opposition was the more representative, an accommodation to the Restoration the more marginal response among the Hegelians.

⁷³ Interestingly enough, the set of notes on Hegel's 1817–18 lectures – G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft*, with an introduction by Otto Pöggeler, (Hamburg: Meiner, 1983) – contains remarks that point in the same direction: §149, p. 226; §156, pp. 240 ff., remarks that do not recur in the published version of the *Philosophy of Right*. One should not overlook the difference between the rudimentary character of Hegel's short remarks and Gans' fully developed "theory of opposition."

or contingent, is a *necessary* element of *every* state.⁷⁴ Gans emphasises this point of view by directing the attention of his audience to the negative consequences of the absence of opposition: “Where the state does not have to deal with an opposition, it declines into stagnation (*Faulheit*).” (*GPhS*, p. 136) Other important aspects spelled out in this section on the opposition are:

(a) the tasks that a house of representatives should fulfill (*GPhS*, p. 136): “The estates, the chamber of peers as well as the chamber of deputies, have nothing to do with the government; they shall merely participate in legislation and taxation. The government has to submit the proposed bills to the estates.”

(b) the opening of its meetings and debates to the public: “public access is not only useful and good, but even necessary. The people thereby gain an insight into the common good” (*GPhS*, pp. 136 f).

In the 1832–3 lectures (*GNU*, p. 103), Gans adds the argument that the estates, whenever there is no public access, can easily be pressured by the government; and, in order to emphasise this argument, he refers to those estates that are not open to the public as “*eingeschlossen*” (which might be rendered as “captured”).

(c) the freedom of the press as the necessary consequence of the existence of public opinion (*GNU*, p. 104). The press might be deceitful, but its deceptions will not last, and: “A state would be weak if it were unable to bear the press. Censorship contains something unpleasant” (*GPhS*, p. 137).

Thus, Gans is still using Hegel’s own method of criticising the status quo implicitly by presenting what is rational but as yet unrealised; he goes beyond Hegel, however, in collecting these aspects under the explicit and, under the circumstances, provocative label of a “theory of opposition.” What must have made this provocation particularly painful to the authorities was the fact that Gans delivered his lectures in the law faculty of the Prussian capital, the very place where the top civil servants were being trained.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ In his 1832–3 lectures (*GNU*, 102), Gans insists that the opposition “has to be systematic, as the negation must not be contingent.”

⁷⁵ Cf. N. Waszek, “Die Staatswissenschaften an der Universität Berlin im 19. Jahrhundert,” and, for further references, my “Bibliographie zur Geschichte der staats- und wirtschaftswissenschaftlichen Lehre in Deutschland,” both in *Die Institutionalisierung der Nationalökonomie an deutschen Universitäten*, ed. N. Waszek (St. Katharinen: Scripta Mercaturae, 1988), 266–301 and 354–85.

Three years later, in 1832, Gans is even more direct in his criticism. In one of his articles in his *Beiträge zur Revision der Preussischen Gesetzgebung*, he exposes the Prussian status quo and makes the critical implications of Hegel's view even more explicit by raising and answering the following questions: "What, then, are the peculiar and characteristic features of the Prussian state [. . .]? What shape and form does this state have? With what name can [. . . this state] be described? Is it an absolute, a paternal, a constitutional state?"⁷⁶

Although, according to Gans' definitions, the Prussian state can be called neither an absolute state, for it contains spheres that have preserved their independence, nor a paternal state, for it contains ideas of legality and rationality not to be found in a paternal, traditional state, it cannot be called a constitutional state either because it lacks the two crucial aspects of this type, namely the subjects' privilege of paying or refusing to pay taxes, and the subjects' participation in legislation. Gans, therefore, goes beyond Hegel in introducing a new concept to characterise the Prussian state: He calls it "a state of tutelage" or guardianship (*ein vormundschaftlicher Staat*). Gans explains his concept as a union of two opposing principles: the independence of "the subjects under tutelage" (*die Bevormundeten*) on the one hand, and the external force of the state on the other. Gans' further definition displays the conceptual clarity of a well-trained lawyer as well as a fine sense of critical irony, reminding us of his early friendship with Heinrich Heine⁷⁷: "In himself [*an sich*], the subject under tutelage [*der Bevormundete*] is free but, in reality, he is not; what he could and should do, is executed by another, as it is assumed that he would not do it properly."⁷⁸

Gans goes on to distinguish the tutelary state from the absolute or despotic state. As opposed to the arbitrariness and caprice of the latter, the former has to provide general reasons for its conduct; it has to show that it serves a purpose.

In the political context of his time, this characterisation of the Prussian state may appear critical enough, but Gans does not leave it at that. He brings the Hegelian view of a necessary development towards greater

⁷⁶ *GPhS*, 305.

⁷⁷ Gans and Heine appear to have met early in 1822. They became friends and cooperated in the Berlin association for Jewish culture [*Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden*] until Heine left Berlin in May 1823.

⁷⁸ *GPhS*, 308 f.

freedom to bear upon the contemporary situation:

A state of tutelage, like tutelage itself, can last only for a certain period. The emancipation to a higher and freer position lies in its nature. [...] The state] can deny and postpone it for a while, but it cannot get rid of its ultimate result. It is to be supposed that the years of instruction [*Lehrjahre*] will soon be over in our case and that the ideas and conceptions which have begun to alter and interfere with the affairs of Germany will not remain alien to the state that is called upon to stand at the head of our German fatherland.⁷⁹

What this quotation illustrates is Gans' impatience. He was no longer willing to wait and hope for a constitution but had begun to promote this aim even against the existing political order. The Prussian government did not fail to notice this overtone of the article, and Gans experienced what he had called "the unpleasantness of censorship" as he was 'persuaded' to discontinue his periodical on the revision of Prussian legislation.⁸⁰

The gap between the 'consciousness' and the 'realisation' of freedom, one might conclude, had thus become a gap between Hegelianism and the government.⁸¹ In the remaining years of his life, Eduard Gans took up the government's challenge: He upheld the *principle* that Hegel's views on freedom had inspired – that every state has to legitimise itself as a step in the development of freedom. According to Gans, the Prussian monarchy and its government, by its refusal to grant a constitution, fell short of the level of freedom the age called for. In his own way, by publishing and, in particular, by lecturing, Gans continued with his endeavours to contribute to the realisation of the desired change, a fact that may well account for the amazing success of his lectures.⁸² Under the watchful eye of the government's spies, Gans formulated his lectures in a most clever manner: They remained within the precarious limits set by censorship, and yet, to his attentive audiences, among whom, as has been said, was the young law student Marx, the critical consequences to be drawn from them were obvious.⁸³ Given the political circumstances, even the following

⁷⁹ *GPhS*, 313.

⁸⁰ That censorship was the decisive factor is clear from Gans' own preface (1832, pp. III f), dated June 3, 1832. Cf. Reissner (1965), pp. 144 f; O. Pöggeler (1986), 330 f.

⁸¹ Cf. H. Lübke (1974), 60.

⁸² For a poetic comment on the popularity of Gans' lectures, see Heinrich Heine, *Sämtliche Schriften in zwölf Bänden*, ed. K. Briegleb (Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein, 1981), vol. 7, 355.

⁸³ See the account of Gans' lectures given by Heinrich Laube, "Gans und Immermann," in *Heinrich Laubes gesammelte Werke*, 50 vols., ed. Heinrich Hubert Houben (Leipzig: Hesse, 1909), vol. 50, 127. For Marx's attendance at Gans' lectures, see Sepp Miller and Bruno Sawadzki, *Karl Marx in Berlin. Beiträge zur Biographie von Karl Marx* (Berlin: Das

dictum, which K. A. Varnhagen von Ense claims to have heard from Gans in a private conversation, appears plausible: "It is already a step forward when the government is afraid."⁸⁴ This statement, if we believe in its authenticity, seems to anticipate much of the radicalism of the rising generation of Marx, Ruge, and others. It is still, however, difficult to predict how Gans would have acted had he lived to see the Prussian politics of the 1840s, after the succession of Friedrich Wilhelm IV.

Indeed we do find him, towards the end of his life, in correspondence with Ruge, willing to contribute to the latter's journal *Hallische Jahrbücher*.⁸⁵ The government's stubborn refusal to grant a constitution thus appears to have driven him into cooperation with the more radical representatives of the rising generation. However, one might also argue that Gans wanted to remain true to what he himself called the 'Aristotelian middle' and what we might call, in contrast to an accommodating right wing and a revolutionary left wing, the Hegelian middle.⁸⁶ Soon after his death, there appeared an autobiographical note by Gans in Ruge's *Jahrbücher*, a note that may be regarded as his last word and legacy:

I belong to those people who sympathise with the advances of their own time, who desire a representative monarchy, who dislike the medieval regressions, but who cannot like anarchic conditions any better. The middle, i.e. the truly Aristotelian middle alone, I have not only loved constantly, but also regarded as the truth itself.⁸⁷

IV. CONCLUSION

Gans contributed to the debates on the social question and on the constitutional issue not arbitrarily among the variety of his general concerns, but as central issues of his political thought. As has been well documented, he worked on both these concerns continually, from the late 1820s until

Neue Berlin, 1956), 42, 84, 113; Günther Rose, "Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels an der Berliner Universität," in *Forschen und Wirken. Festschrift zur 150-Jahr-Feier der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1960), vol. I, 133–63, here 138 ff.

⁸⁴ Karl August Varnhagen von Ense, *Tagebücher*, vol. I (Leipzig, 1861), 97.

⁸⁵ "Eduard Gans an Arnold Ruge, Berlin, 15. Juli 1838," in *Die Hegelsche Linke. Dokumente zur Philosophie und Politik im deutschen Vormärz*, ed. Heinz and Ingrid Pepperle (Frankfurt am Main: Röderberg, 1986), 768; Arnold Ruges *Briefwechsel und Tagebuchblätter aus den Jahren 1825–1880*, ed. Paul Nerrlich, vol. I (Berlin: Weidmann, 1886), 169 ff.

⁸⁶ For a full exposition of this distinction, see Henning Ottmann, *Individuum und Gemeinschaft bei Hegel* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977).

⁸⁷ *Hallische Jahrbücher*, no. 113 (1840), 903.

his death. Both were fresh questions that had acquired urgency in the early 1830s, and Gans made the connection between the two subjects by perceiving movement within society as the basis of the constitutional issue.

In their new significance, both debates were on post-Hegelian themes, handling questions beyond the historical experience of that philosopher. Gans' originality emerges, however, not only in contrast with Hegel (his proto-syndicalist synthesis of Hegelian and Saint-Simonian elements, and his fully developed 'theory of opposition'), but also by comparison with the currents of German social and political thought of his time. His position in the constitutional debate distinguished him sharply from the liberals in the southwest of Germany, such as Karl von Rotteck (1775–1840),⁸⁸ by the double provocation it implied.⁸⁹ His theory of opposition was not only a constant reminder of the fact that Friedrich Wilhelm III had not kept his promise of 1815 to give Prussia a constitution, but it also imparted a particular flavour to the awaited constitution. While mainstream liberals, close to conceptions initiated in the eighteenth century, were still thinking of a constitution with a dual character (the king on the one hand, the house of representatives on the other), Gans was already envisaging an ideal of a parliament divided into government and opposition.

Gans' forward-looking ideas on both questions, elaborated by critical reflection on French and English conditions, went well beyond the social experience and the political horizon of the more traditional liberals. He opened up perspectives whose systematic exploration was left to the generation of Lorenz von Stein (1815–90)⁹⁰ and Karl Marx. Both were marked by Gans, the latter as his student, the former, arriving in Berlin

⁸⁸ On Rotteck, see Horst Ehmke, *Karl von Rotteck, der "politische Professor"* (Karlsruhe: Müller, 1964); Gerhard Göhler, "Volksouveränität und konstitutionelle Monarchie," in *Politische Theorien von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. H.-J. Lieber (München: Olzog, 1991), 387–411; *Rechtsphilosophie bei Rotteck/Welcker*, ed. Hermann Klenner (Freiburg: Haufe, 1994); Rainer Schöttle, *Politische Theorien des süddeutschen Liberalismus im Vormärz* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1994).

⁸⁹ This "double provocation" has convincingly been analysed by Reinhard Blänkner's contribution to Gans (2002), 367–408, in particular 395 ff. The next few phrases follow Blänkner's analysis closely.

⁹⁰ On Stein in his relation to Hegel and Gans, cf. my introduction to Lorenz Stein, *Le concept de société* [1850], trans. Marc Béghin (Grenoble: ELLUG, 2002), 9–61, esp. 25 and 38–61; and my article "Aux sources de l'Etat social à l'allemande: Lorenz von Stein – et Hegel," in *Hegel: droit, histoire, société*, ed. N. Waszek [*Revue Germanique Internationale*, no. 15]. (Paris: PUF, 2001), 211–38.

only after Gans' death, as his attentive reader.⁹¹ While Marx would later turn away from Gans' modified Hegelianism, his early critique of bourgeois society was certainly inspired by the foremost among his Berlin academic teachers.

⁹¹ Stein's unpublished papers, now at the State Library at Kiel, contain a lengthy excerpt on Gans' history of the law of succession.

Ludwig Feuerbach's Critique of Religion and the End of Moral Philosophy

Howard Williams

INTRODUCTION

Ludwig Feuerbach was in his time perhaps the best known of the Left Hegelian philosophers. His critique of religion *The Essence of Christianity* (1841) almost instantaneously turned him into a figure of great renown. The book became the centre of controversy among an inquisitive and religiously aware German public. As Friedrich Engels says of its impact on orthodox Hegelianism: "with one blow it pulverised the contradiction, in that without circumlocution it placed materialism on the throne again. . . . The spell was broken; the 'system' was exploded and cast aside. . . . One must himself have experienced the liberating effect of the book to get an idea of it. Enthusiasm was general; we all became at once Feuerbachians."¹ Marx also was infected by this enthusiasm and went on to write his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* under its influence. A further indication of the great interest that Feuerbach's writing aroused is that the English novelist George Eliot completed a translation of the book and published it under her own name, Marian Evans, in 1854.²

Here I want to explore Ludwig Feuerbach's intellectual development to see what led him to this devastating and seminal critique of Christianity.

¹ F. Engels, "Feuerbach and the End of German Classical Philosophy." in *Marx-Engels Selected Works in One Volume* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1968), 602–3.

² "Like Feuerbach and many other contemporaries, in revolt against what seemed a repressive orthodoxy and against the equation of the church with established social order, she sought to retain the ethos of Christianity without its faith, its humanism without its theism, its hope for man without its hope for the sovereignty of God." Reinhold Niebuhr, foreword to *The Essence of Christianity*, tr. George Eliot (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), ix.

According to Karl Barth, "no one among the modern philosophers has been so intensively, so exclusively and precisely occupied with the problem of theology as Feuerbach." Feuerbach's fame rests on his critical encounter with Christian theology. "No philosopher of his time penetrated the contemporary theological situation as effectively as he, and few spoke with such pertinence."³ In 1846, at the height of his career, Feuerbach included in the second volume of his collected works a section entitled "Fragments towards characterising my philosophical development." These fragments are very revealing about Feuerbach's personality, motivation and philosophical orientation. They tell us a great deal about the contribution he thinks he is making and where he thinks his originality lies. I want here to draw on those fragments not only to explore these issues but also to pose the question of why Feuerbach largely ignored the thinking of one of his major forerunners in the philosophy of religion: Immanuel Kant. Kant's contribution to the interpretation and understanding of Christianity seems to have a great deal in common with Feuerbach's work. Like Feuerbach he takes a largely humanistic approach to the Biblical texts and reinterprets Christian devotion as a form of self- and species-affirmation.

Feuerbach remarkably presents his philosophy of religion in the 1840s as though it were the first to take seriously the apparent ethical, social, and anthropological limitations of the Christian religion. Feuerbach appears to pride himself on the apparent uniqueness and necessary loneliness of his task. He regards himself as taking on the established church and its various priests almost single-handedly and exceptionally. However, it seems a strange oversight that he does not take into account Immanuel Kant's extraordinary essay *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason Alone*, which was published in the teeth of severe opposition from the Prussian censor in the early 1790s. It is true to say that Kant's essay is not as direct an attack on the Christian religion as is Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity*; nonetheless, it is far from being an orthodox defence of practised Christianity. Kant tries to reduce religious doctrine to what he regards as its ethical core. He ends up by discarding the claims made by those defenders of religious institutions that they represent the true church and argues for a more secular vision of religious virtue embodied in the idea of an ethical commonwealth. It is therefore difficult to imagine that if Feuerbach had read Kant's work on the philosophy of religion sympathetically he would not have found a great deal in Kant's thinking

³ Karl Barth, "Introductory Essay," *The Essence of Christianity*, x.

that would add support to his own critique of Christianity. One possible explanation is that Feuerbach was so deeply influenced by Hegel's critical reading of Kant that he never thought to refer to Hegel's principal predecessor as a source of his own humanist vision. There are other possible grounds for this paradox, and it is an issue that I shall return to before concluding.

HUMANISM AND CHRISTIANITY: ANTITHESIS OR COMPLEMENTARITY?

In *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, Kant strips down the Christian religion to what he regards as its moral core.⁴ This is the pursuit of virtue with the aim of founding with all others a worldwide ethical commonwealth. Kant makes it clear that he respects the work of churches and church leaders in trying to bring about this moral ideal, but he is equally clear that they do not represent the sole or, indeed, even the most important means in bringing it about. The general external trappings of religious faith Kant regards as, at best, symbolically representing the change at which true virtuous behaviour aims, and, at worst, seriously misleading the faithful in their goal of achieving goodness. Although Kant does not try to undermine entirely the metaphysical or transcendent side of religion, he does regard its role as secondary and dependent upon the pursuit of moral goals. It might be said with Kant that the essence of true religion, of which the best forms of Christian worship are part, is morality. Humanity is at the core of Kant's interpretation of religion. It has to do with the perfection of the human race as the highest aspect of nature. With Kant, religion is moral anthropology. This brings him very close to Ludwig Feuerbach.

Michalson has commented on this affinity between Kant's critique of religion and Feuerbach's anthropological materialism. As he remarks, "notwithstanding Kant's own personal piety, the effect of his position is that language about God gradually becomes either redundant or a disguised version of language about ourselves, in a manner foreshadowing Ludwig Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*." Although at no point can Kant

⁴ G. Michalson, *Kant and the Problem of God* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), viii, has described the "inner momentum" of Kant's philosophy as pointing "beyond theism toward a fully emancipated theory of autonomous rationality." "Roughly speaking," Michalson adds, "the part of Kant's thought that makes it 'modern' effectively jettisons a traditional religious content, beginning with divine transcendence itself – notwithstanding Kant's own claim regarding the way morality inevitably leads to religion."

accurately be described as an atheist, his interpretation of the Christian religion nonetheless departs radically from the traditional doctrines of the main Churches. Michalson strikingly concludes that "Kant in fact becomes a way station between Luther and Marx in the debate over other-worldliness, thereby sharing more in common with Feuerbach than with liberal theologians."⁵

We can see from Feuerbach's philosophical development that he is never far from a moral, anthropological vision of religion and Christianity. From his early days Feuerbach demonstrates a fascination with religious issues. As a sixteen-year-old he comments in his diary: "Whoever sets to one side the desire for worldly things and thinks of that which is immortal, will be so firmly held at anchor that no storm or cloudburst will disturb him in the least"⁶ (I, 358).

Although he began his academic career as a student of theology in Heidelberg and Berlin, Feuerbach was rapidly drawn to the study of philosophy. Under the influence of his Heidelberg teacher Karl Daub, he became more and more attracted to Hegel's philosophical system and asked to be transferred to Berlin where he could attend Hegel's courses.⁷ As this letter to his father written from Berlin in 1825 shows, Feuerbach's intellectual ambition was taking him increasingly beyond the limits of orthodox religion:

Yes it is true: I have given up theology, but I have not given it up lightly or wilfully, not because I do not like it, but because it does not satisfy me, but because it does not give me what I require, what I necessarily need. My mind does not now find itself in the limits of the Holy Land; my sense now stands in the wider world; my possessive and tyrannical soul wants now to devour everything. My requirements are simply unlimited: I want to take nature to my heart, from whose depths cowardly theology recoils. I want man, but the whole man who is not the object of theologians, the anatomist or the jurist. Be pleased with me that a new life, a new time has begun for me; be pleased that I have escaped the company of the theologians and have made friends with minds like Aristotle, Spinoza, Kant and Hegel. To send me back to theology would mean reconfining an infinite spirit in its dead hulk, to restore a butterfly to its former pupal condition. (I, 362)

From this note it is clear that Feuerbach was deeply attracted to the study of philosophy because he believed that it would take him nearer to the real human being or "the whole man." For Feuerbach it represents the

⁵ Michalson, *Kant and the Problem of God*, 2.

⁶ References are to the Bolin-Jodl edition (re-issued by Hans-Martin Sass) of the *Sämtliche Werke* (Stuttgart: Fromann, 1962).

⁷ Cf. C. Weckwerth, *Ludwig Feuerbach* (Hamburg: Junius, 2002), 13.

possibility of his own rebirth or a new life in the company of great thinkers (among whom he includes Kant), who will allow his “infinite spirit” to develop. Later Feuerbach was to make the same criticism of Hegel’s philosophy as he here makes of theology, namely that it is too abstract, that it takes him away from “the wider world” and does not properly acquaint him with man. We can gain some sense of the gradual disillusionment that was to occur with Hegelian philosophy from these comments from the Erlangen Lectures on Logic and Metaphysics of 1827–8:

How is philosophy now related to religion? Hegel insisted strongly on the agreement of philosophy with religion, particularly the doctrines of Christianity; at the same time he comprehended religion only as a stage of spirit. Existing religions admittedly contained countless horrible things unacceptable to truth, but should not religion be comprehended more generally and the harmony of philosophy with religion be established in the recognition and justification of certain doctrines? Is there no other way in which they conform to one another? (I, 363)

By 1830, in *Thoughts on Death and Immortality* Feuerbach has already begun thinking along a critical path that was eventually to lead him beyond the compass of Hegel’s philosophy. The publication did not imply an open break with his teacher because Feuerbach at this stage believed he was only developing ideas that were already to be found in Hegel’s system. Indeed, Feuerbach believed that Hegel’s philosophy would provide the ideas with which to begin a new epoch in human history. This epoch would take the human race beyond the Christian period.⁸ The publication was sufficiently radical to signify the end of Feuerbach’s ambitions for an academic post, for although the book appeared anonymously Feuerbach soon became widely known as its author, and so as too heterodox to merit appointment to a University chair.

What counts more than anything now is to overcome the old division between now and the hereafter (earth and heaven), so that humanity can with its whole soul and whole heart concentrate on itself; for only this undivided concentration on the real world will create new life, give rise to great men, great ideas and acts. Instead of immortal individuals the ‘new religion’ has rather to postulate worthy, intellectually and bodily healthy human beings. Health has more worth for them than immortality. (I, 366)

What drives Feuerbach to his thoroughgoing critique of Christian belief is ultimately his deep insight into and subsequent disappointment with Hegel’s philosophical system. It appears to be a product of his earlier

⁸ Weckwerth, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, 17.

self-declared position as a disciple of Hegel. Ludwig Feuerbach seems to have expected too much of Hegel's thinking. As a young and enthusiastic student he had been drawn to the all-encompassing scope of Hegel's philosophy. For the younger Feuerbach, Hegel's system held the key to human experience. He was inspired by the concept of spirit to think that the persistent tensions of human existence between nature and mind, the self and the other, and the individual and community might be resolved. But Feuerbach's close study of Hegel's thinking and his years as its teacher proved the opposite. Feuerbach's disillusionment with Hegel's philosophy of religion was particularly acute. At first he accepted the Hegelian view that religion, and Christian religion in particular, represented a form of awareness of spirit, but at a level lower than the awareness that philosophy could provide. But gradually Feuerbach found this vision to be unworkable: first, because there was so great a gap between Christian belief as it was practised and Christian belief as it appeared in Hegel's philosophy as a moment of spirit, and second because Feuerbach became more and more drawn to the aspect of religion that had always appealed to him, its sensuality. Unlike Hegel (and also in this respect Kant), Feuerbach attributed a great value to the emotional aspect of religious belief. He saw it as corresponding to a legitimate need in human individuals to have an immediate and outward object for their longings and aspirations. He could not accept Hegel's philosophical view of religion as simply a pictorial representation of the true reconciliation of individuals with the world, as equally he utterly rejected Kant's notion of god as "a postulate of pure practical reason." Religion within the boundaries of reason did not appeal to Feuerbach; what above all he valued was religion within the boundaries of the senses.

Feuerbach came to value the sensuous god of the ordinary individual and the orthodox priest, not because he shared their faith but because it brought out what for him was the true basis of religion.

The fundamental dogmas of Christianity are realised wishes of the heart; – the essence of Christianity is the essence of human feeling. It is pleasanter to be passive than to act, to be redeemed and made free by another than to free oneself; pleasanter to make one's salvation dependent on a person than on the force of one's own spontaneity; pleasanter to set oneself before an object of love than an object of effort; pleasanter to know oneself beloved by god than merely to have that simple, natural self-love which is innate in all beings. (EC, 140)

The true basis of religion is anthropological; it provides us with a mirror for our own selves. We magnify and worship in God what we dream to be

ourselves. The sensuous side of religious belief brings out most clearly what needs to be changed in human life. The human race has to be brought to a self-conscious awareness of its own divinity and cast aside the half-world of Christianity.

HEAVEN AND THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

In comparison with Feuerbach, Kant shows a little more tolerance towards the current practice of Christianity. Although Kant indicates that you can do everything just as well, if not better, outside an institutionalised Church, he acknowledges that organised Christian religion and morality have common goals.⁹ Feuerbach is not so sure. His attitude towards Christian religion as it is practised is a good deal more suspicious. He regards orthodox Christianity as leading to an unhealthy state of mind. Instead of encouraging people to engage positively with their lives, he thinks it focuses too heavily on life as “a vale of tears.” He explains the pessimistic approach of Christian churches as a product of their own doctrines and adherents. He argues that it is “only for the most miserable is the world miserable, only for the empty, empty.” He deplores the emphasis that faithful Christians put on the afterlife, and he would much prefer to see the stress instead being placed on the here and now:

The heart, at least the healthy heart, already finds its full contentment here. A “new religion” if it again establishes a future, a beyond or a hereafter as a goal for humans is just as false as Christianity; it is not the religion of thought and deed that live only in the eternal present, but of the soul and fantasy; for only the imagination is the organ of the future. It is not a step forward but a step back, for Protestantism has already in its way reconciled religion with the real world. (I, 367)

In *Thoughts on Death and Immortality*, Feuerbach wants to turn his back on the Christian notion of heaven. The idea of the nonsensuous persistence of the human soul after death exerts no appeal for him. He wants to retain the focus on the empirical individual and life in the present.

⁹ Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 118. Here Kant argues that “ecclesiastical faith has the pure faith of religion for its supreme interpreter.” He sees a tension always between the faith upheld by the organised churches and the faith required by reason, which can be maintained only by an invisible church. Kant thinks that visible churches are driven by their very nature into sectarian strife. Each wants to be regarded as the true representative of the genuine faith. For Kant, in contrast, rational faith can be realised only within a spiritual church, one that does not have actual administrators and priests.

He does accord some status to the idea of a beyond or heaven but – in a step that is entirely symptomatic of the tenor of his philosophy as a whole – he does so in an entirely sensuous, corporeal context. “The true beyond” is, he claims, “the heaven where the individual is free from the determinations and limitations of his individuality and so free from this self, is love, perception and knowledge; only in these can you be infinite” (XI, 147). In seeking and giving love we can attain true immortality. The apparent loss of self that takes place in a loving relationship appeals to Feuerbach because in this instance individual awareness merges into a general awareness or consciousness (that we find also in perception and knowledge) that he identifies with Hegel’s concept of spirit (*Geist*). With a heavily Hegelian turn of phrase he comments, “the individual dies because he is only a successive moment in the remembering process of spirit, the individual dies only in and through history because he is a link in the historical whole” (XI, 142). Immortality for Feuerbach is a feeling of being at one with our fellow human beings.

Kant in contrast still has a place for the nonsensuous idea of immortality. He does not of course conceptualise it in the traditional Christian sense of death and resurrection, but rather it is for him entirely a postulate of pure practical reason. In *The Critique of Pure Reason* Kant opposes the idea that the existence of God can be empirically established. He has no place at all for the side of the Christian notion of immortality that most appeals to Feuerbach: the emotional, sensuous, immediate aspect. Adhering to a belief in immortality that retains this aspect is for Kant a sign of immaturity. The enlightened person will not interpret the traditional belief in an immediate, emotional way, but rather will see it as arising from a need of practical reason to specify an appropriate period of time in which to fulfil the moral law in a perfect manner¹⁰ (Ak V, 132). In contrast to the orthodox belief that the immortality of the soul requires us to behave morally, Kant holds that the idea of immortality arises from our efforts to lead a moral life.

In *The Essence of Christianity*, Feuerbach acknowledges that Kant plays an important part in the critique of religion. But the compliment he pays Kant for contributing to this process is two-edged.

Kant is well known to have maintained, in his critique of the proofs of the existence of God, that that existence is not susceptible of proof of reason. He did not merit on this account, the blame that was cast upon him by Hegel. The idea of the existence of God in these proofs is a thoroughly empirical one; but I cannot

¹⁰ Howard Caygill, *Kant Dictionary* (Blackwell: Oxford, 1995), 250.

deduce empirical existence from an a priori idea. The only real ground of blame against Kant is, that in laying down this position he supposed it to be something remarkable, whereas it is self-evident. Reason cannot constitute itself an object of sense. I cannot, in thinking, at the same time represent what I think as a sensible object, external to me. The proof of the existence of God transcends the limits of reason; true; but in the same sense in which sight, hearing, smelling transcend the limits of reason. It is absurd to reproach reason that it does not satisfy a demand which can only address itself to the senses. Existence, empirical existence is proved to me by the senses alone. (201)

Feuerbach takes Kant's achievement in *The Critique of Pure Reason* to be a trivial one insofar as it undermines theological dogmatism. But Feuerbach's deflation of Kant's theoretical attainment itself betrays a limited understanding of Kant's thinking. Kant's critique does indeed attempt to undermine the theoretical claims of speculative theologians about the existence of God, but he nonetheless seeks to find a place for a belief in God within a rational outlook. Kant sees his undermining of the theoretical claims of reason about God's existence as making room for the claims of practical reason in this regard. That we cannot directly experience God does not lead Kant to dismiss the idea of a divine being. What we have to do is to dismiss its relevance as an object of knowledge (although it may guide us as an idea in attaining knowledge); however, we are obliged to recognise and accept its relevance still as a guide to action. If we are to act morally and freely (which with Kant always amounts to the same thing), we have to entertain the idea of the one divine being who synthesises human and natural existence.

Kant regards his account of religion within the limits of pure reason, humanistic though it may appear to us, as growing out of Christianity itself. He does not see it as denying what Christianity sought to teach but rather as growing immanently out of it. The faith in evidence in Christianity is in its rational form an aspect of the pure, practical use of reason. We need to assume the existence of God because "we have to judge." "For the pure practical use of reason consists in the precepts of moral laws. They all lead, however, to the idea of the highest good possible in the world insofar as it is possible only through freedom."¹¹ Feuerbach's relation to Christianity is more negative. Perhaps Feuerbach, who was originally a student of theology, felt the need to distance himself from orthodox religion more profoundly than Kant.¹² So, though Feuerbach's

¹¹ Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, 8; Ak 8, 139.

¹² "In a pure Kantian religion, therefore, any worship will be planned solely with a view to the inculcation and exercise of moral virtue. This is one of Kant's major disagreements

critique of religion has a similar humanistic message to Kant's, it emerges as a more hostile response to established religion.

LOVE OR VIRTUE?

Despite the moments of hostility revealed in his writing about Christianity, Feuerbach also demonstrates a great sympathy and understanding for its major themes. Feuerbach's critique of Christianity rests more heavily on an understanding of emotion than does Kant's. As we can see from his diary of 1834–6: "To believe in Christ is to err (to be mistaken) (to be stirred by) through the mistakes of a human being not according to his good nature, but through his sad experiences, that in human beings make them into individuals, into humans at all."¹³

The experiences of Jesus Christ mirror the life of the human individual in general. His is an experience we can all identify with. For Feuerbach we are identifying with the human condition. "Christ was a human being as a human being. The belief in Christ is a belief in the human being."¹⁴

Feuerbach sees in human failure, depicted so graphically in the life of Christ, the source of our virtues. "The failures of humans are only the Incognitos of their virtues. Behind this failure lies only this virtue" (I, 369).

Whereas the outcome of Kant's assessment of religion is the pursuit of virtue through principled action, Feuerbach follows the more dramatic course of emphasising emotion and, above all, love:

Whereas love with the old philosophers was a child born outside marriage, begot by the concubine nature, it is in contrast with recent philosophers the legitimate daughter of their philosophy. The wife is now received in the community of spirit; she is the living compendium of moral philosophy. (I, 371)

Kant's approach to morality would seem to fall into the category of that presented by the old philosophers who treat love with too much distance. Feuerbach reproaches those who think that the pursuit of duty "requires abstinence." For Feuerbach the pursuit of duty "commands pleasure." "We should enjoy" (I, 371). Here he seems very close to utilitarianism when he argues that "abstinence is only a sad exception from the rule" of the pursuit of enjoyment "and should only take place when necessity

with prevalent religious practices; he himself avoided attending public worship." Robert Merrihew Adams, Introduction to *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*.

¹³ Feuerbach, *Sämtliche Werke*, Bolin-Jodl, II, 368.

¹⁴ Feuerbach, *Sämtliche Werke*, Bolin-Jodl, II, 368.

ordains" (I, 371). But the pursuit of happiness is not enough for Feuerbach. No one can be certain that he or she will be happy. It is not sure that we will enjoy pleasure, but we are certain that we are "conditioned to live." And "the living of life is love" (I, 371).

Feuerbach puts love at the centre of his moral thinking. "There is only one evil," he says, and that is "egoism," and there is only one good and that is "love." If you truly love, he thinks, "then all other virtues will come to you of themselves" (I, 373). Friendship and love are also a part of Kant's account of virtue. But they do not determine virtue in the way that they do with Feuerbach. Kant makes love and friendship subordinate to wider conceptions of community, harmony, reciprocity, and justice. In Kant's account, love could not take precedence over treating others also as ends and not only as means, and abiding by the laws of your country. "Friendship" is "an ideal of each participating and sharing sympathetically in the other's well-being through the morally good will that unites them, and even though it does not produce the complete happiness of life, the adoption of this ideal in their disposition toward each other makes them deserving of happiness; hence human beings have a duty of friendship" (585; 6: 469). However, friendship is a slippery ideal. It is never possible to establish that the reciprocal bonding of love in such a relationship is equally felt and acted upon. Excessive demonstration of the affection of love may lead to a loss of respect in the recipient. Love cannot be raised, therefore, into an exclusive moral ideal. It has to be pursued in relation with other equally important ideals. Feuerbach probably believes that genuine love would not run counter to these wider goals, but he provides no basis on which this can be ruled out.

Whereas for Kant the postulate of the immortality of the soul is necessary to support our pursuit of virtue, for Feuerbach it is explicable only through love. In assuming that our soul lives on indefinitely, we provide, Kant thinks, a sufficient period of time in which to pursue our perfection, and so underpin our moral seriousness.¹⁵ Kant rejects any empirical understanding of the concept. But with Feuerbach, the empirical – at least in the form of feeling – provides the key: "love alone resolves the riddle of immortality" (II, 373).

Kant, like Feuerbach, deals with the urge to make a completely fresh start in his philosophy of religion. Kant is aware of the millennialist aspect of human consciousness and pays close attention to it in his understanding of religion. For Kant, this desire to make a fresh start should not be

¹⁵ Caygill, *Kant Dictionary*, 250.

seen in a wide social context of revolution. Rather, for him the millennialist motif should first of all be interpreted at a personal level. We can only conceive of ourselves as altering our personality so that we no longer pursue evil at the expense of the good as an immediate, once-and-for-all event. This is the only kind of revolutionary event we should look forward to. We have to undergo a complete change of heart overnight. Feuerbach, however, is attracted to the idea of an immediate social transformation. He likes to cast himself as a revolutionary. As he puts it in comments taken from his 1835 *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*:

If mankind wishes to found a new epoch it must ruthlessly break with the past. It must postulate that whatever has been up to now is nothing. Only this pre-supposition will produce the power and desire for new creation. All connections with what is already available will lame the flight of its creative strength. At times therefore mankind has to throw out the baby with the bathwater; it must be unjust and biased. Justice is an act of criticism; however criticism only follows action, it never itself comes to action. (II, 378)

With his notion of an ethical commonwealth overlapping with political commonwealths, Kant brings politics into religion. The ethical commonwealth is personal and internal.¹⁶ We gain access to it only through our own virtuous motivation, but this can have an impact on the political commonwealth. The more we approximate to the goal of an ethical commonwealth in our motivation, the better is the chance that political commonwealths will live in peace with one another. Feuerbach also wants to bring politics and religion together, but in a more radical way. He anticipates that politics may become our religion ("The Necessity for the Reform of Philosophy," p. 78). After uncovering the essentially humanist nature of the Christian religion, Feuerbach wants to follow through with a humanisation of politics. And because the essential core of religion is humanity, the humanising of politics is implicitly a move towards a sanctification of politics. "As once it freed itself from the church so now the

¹⁶ "Since the duties of virtue concern the entire human race, the concept of an ethical community always refers to the ideal of a totality of human beings, and in this it distinguishes itself from the concept of a political community. Hence a multitude of human beings united in that purpose cannot yet be called an ethical community as such but only a particular society that strives after the consensus of all human beings (indeed, of all finite rational beings) in order to establish an absolute ethical whole of which each partial society is only a representation or schema; for each of these societies can in turn be represented, in relation to others of this kind, as situated in the natural condition, with all the imperfections of the latter (as is the case with separate political states not bound together through a public international law)." *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, 107–8; 6:96.

spirit must free itself from the state. Civil death alone is the price through which you can now earn immortality of the spirit" (I, 381).

Feuerbach thinks he is eminently well qualified to give a verdict on religion and, especially, Christianity.

My little friend! I tell you: if anyone was called or justified to give a verdict about religion then I am he. For I have not just studied religion from books, I have come to know it through life and, indeed, not through the lives of others but through my own life which has demonstrated palpably to me the causes and effects of religion just as much from its good side as its bad. Religion was for me an object of practice before it ever became an object of theory. (I, 381)

Feuerbach, as we have seen, began as a student of theology in Heidelberg before moving to philosophy. "The Bible asks, 'whoever does not love his brother, whom he sees, how can he love God whom he cannot see?'" For Feuerbach this question demonstrates the abstractness and alienation represented by the Christian religion. In contrast to the question posed by the Bible he would ask: "who loves his brother, whom he sees, how can he love God whom he does not see?" How can the love for a sensuous "finite" (being) find place in the same heart for the love of a nonsensical (unsensuous) "infinite" being?

Kant takes what a literal-minded theologian might describe as a sceptical attitude to the Bible. According to Kant, the main authorities in the teaching of the Bible should be the "pure religion of reason" and "scriptural scholarship" (105). By the "pure religion of reason" he means his own critical understanding of Christianity where, as he puts it, the Bible is expounded not as an authority on morality but is itself rather "expounded according to morality" (101). Morality or practical reason is the touchstone of religious truth for Kant. We should take from the Bible whatever contributes to the realisation of a truly virtuous life. But Kant does not confront and directly deny the Biblical view in Feuerbach's manner. Christianity for Feuerbach is the "Middle Ages of humanity. We are still living therefore in the barbarism of the Middle Ages" (II, 384). The Bible asks us to love God, but he answers, "only a real being, only that which is also the object of the senses is also the object of real love. To give your heart to a being that exists only in belief, in the imagination, means that you sacrifice real love to an imagined, imaginary love" (II, 384).

In his critique of religion, Kant showed himself to be a reformer. He did not want to cast aside all the existing forms of religious worship. He indeed argued that their rational core was a doctrine of moral ideals reflecting

practical reason, but he saw no justification in imposing this doctrine from the outside. Individuals would have to come of themselves to a better understanding of Christianity and religion in general. Feuerbach in contrast is a good deal more radical. He cannot wait for institutions to change themselves. It seems as though he would be happy to see them swept away:

Nothing is more stupid than to recognise the necessity of a reformation but to try to base that right on civil or canonical law. A cardinal said of Luther, "his teachings I should indeed like to tolerate but I cannot allow him to reform from this standpoint"... But my dear cardinal, from a seminary of cardinals you are only going to get a pope and not a reformer. A reformation does not come legally in all its forms but always comes into being in an original, extraordinary, illegitimate manner. Whoever has the courage and the spirit to be a reformer, is necessarily a usurper; every reform is an act of force of the spirit. (II, 386)

However, Kant is just as radical as Feuerbach in his understanding of the status of the Bible for present-day readers. Kant says of the Holy Scriptures that "the final purpose" of reading them "or of investigating their content is to make men better; the historical element which contributes nothing to this end is something which is in itself quite indifferent, and we can do with it what we like" (102). The literal and historical meaning of the Bible does not greatly concern Kant. He is concerned only with the moral use to which the tales it holds can now be put. Feuerbach makes a similar point if, perhaps, in a more dismissive way.

Mankind will always only define itself. Mankind creates for itself its theoretical and practical tenets. How can you then imagine to find in the Bible something "positive, lasting, unalterable"? In a literal sense the Bible is indeed unalterable; but its sense is as changeable as is the sense of humankind. Each age only reads itself in the Bible; each age has its own, self-made Bible. (II, 387)

The difference here between Feuerbach and Kant is that Kant finds in the continuous adaptability of the Bible a source for its ever-changing moral applicability; Feuerbach in contrast sees this changeability as a weakness and an indication of the dispensability of the Bible. As he sees it, "the word God means in the last instance nothing other than the divinity of the word, the holy scripture nothing other than the holiness of script" (II, 388). For Kant, the Bible has a lasting moral significance; Feuerbach here seems to want only to capture its symbolic significance. He sees it as embodying and symbolising the importance of the written word for human culture.

This brings out the major contrast between Feuerbach's and Kant's philosophies of religion. Kant's critique of religion is founded on a highly complex and intricately worked out ethical system. Kant tries not to leave us empty-handed after having criticised the conventional understanding and experience of religion. He attempts to capture what he regards as the moral spirit of religion in his notion of an ethical commonwealth made up of virtuous individuals seeking their own perfection and the happiness of others. Kant is very precise about what he thinks represents the highest good. However, Feuerbach leaves us only with vague generalities such as "love," "humanity," "praxis," and concern for others.

Aphorisms such as this do not amount to a moral and political philosophy: "What is my principle? *Ego* and *Alter Ego*; 'Egoism' and 'Communism,' for both are as inseparable as heart and head. Without egoism you have no head, and without communism you have no heart" (II, 391).

Whereas for Kant it cannot be a duty to pursue our own happiness because happiness is such an unsure goal, for Feuerbach, "your first duty is to make yourself happy. If you are happy you will make others happy. The happy person only sees happy persons around him" (II, 391). Feuerbach seems to sense the inadequacy of his formulas and tries to compensate for it by making such claims as when the Christian "damns egoism that is simply self-love, then you must consequently damn love towards others. To love is to show good will towards others and to do good for them, thus to recognise the self-love of others as justified." He regards himself as defending an egoism that is not narrow and selfish, but he does not clarify how this is so.

Michalson says of Kant that he "turns out to stand in the same relationship to Feuerbach that the latter stands to Marx."¹⁷ However true this may be as a view of the history of thought, it seems that Feuerbach did not understand Kant to be his precursor in the way that Marx borrowed from Feuerbach. But I can agree with Michalson's general assessment that

although Kant's philosophy falls short of the explicit translation of theology into anthropology that we find in Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*, his principle of immanence provides significant momentum toward just such a translation process. Quite simply, Kant, as much as Hegel, should be viewed as making possible the transformations of European culture that we associate with the rise of humanistic atheism.¹⁸

¹⁷ Michalson, *Kant and the Problem of God*, 127.

¹⁸ Michalson, *Kant and the Problem of God*, 127.

CONCLUSION

Feuerbach's intellectual development is marked by an almost constant preoccupation with religion and the connection between philosophy and religion. This is only to be expected, as he began his academic career as a student of theology. His interests seem to overlap heavily with those of the practising Christian. Feuerbach is throughout concerned with the status and reality (or otherwise) of God, problems of faith, good conduct from a religious perspective, feelings of community, belonging, and love. Feuerbach's social thinking does not stray a great deal beyond the immediate interpersonal, almost familial, context. He sees himself as the philosopher of everyday life, as a philosopher who is accessible to any intelligent person. "Once," he says at the end of "Fragments Concerning His Philosophical Development," "thought was for me the purpose of life; however now life is the purpose of thought" (II, 391). In Feuerbach's understanding, philosophy takes on the goal of organised religion. "True philosophy" for him "consists in making human beings and not books" (II, 391). Feuerbach's intellectual development takes him away from systematic philosophy, particularly as represented by Hegel, and into everyday life.

It is, I think, Feuerbach's preoccupation with Hegel, from first hearing Hegel's lectures in Berlin in the 1820s until the end of his life, that explains his failure to acknowledge and understand Kant's contribution to the critique of religion. It is highly unlikely that Feuerbach ever saw Kant other than through Hegelian lenses. At the forefront of Feuerbach's appreciation of Kant appears to be the Copernican revolution that Kant affected in the theory of knowledge. Corresponding with Hegel's interest in this issue and Hegel's attempts to undermine Kant's notion of the "thing in itself," Feuerbach tends always to refer to Kant as the philosopher who first fully comprehended the dependence of our conceptions of reality upon human thought. In rejecting Hegel's idealism, Feuerbach might have been thrown back onto Kant's "thing in itself," but instead Feuerbach preferred his new kind of emotive materialism.

Paradoxically, in his earlier Hegelian phase Feuerbach had shown a great deal of interest in the history of philosophy. He published two books on the history of modern thought. They were books written very much from the standpoint of a disciple of Hegel. However, when Feuerbach later broke with Hegel he did not attempt to situate his new materialism in the context of earlier philosophical thinking. It seems as though Feuerbach, once he became tired of Hegel's philosophy, became tired

of orthodox philosophy in general. Orthodox thinking could offer him nothing in his attempt to ground philosophy in life. Seemingly it all led to Hegel's objective idealism. Kant also suffered from this judgement in Feuerbach's philosophy. Feuerbach was unable to draw from Kant to strengthen his critique of religion because his image of the philosopher was forever bound up with Hegel's appropriation of him.

What Wartofsky says of Feuerbach is largely true. In trying to explain why he regards Feuerbach as a significant philosophical figure, Wartofsky remarks that

Feuerbach is the first and the greatest of the modern critics of philosophy outside the positivistic tradition. His is a devastating critique of professional and professorial philosophy. Moreover, it is a systematic and thorough one, and not merely rhetorical or aphoristic, like that of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche.¹⁹

Feuerbach believes he has to go beyond philosophy to defeat the abstractness of Hegelian philosophy, so that once Feuerbach hits upon his critique of philosophy, all previous philosophy, including Kant's, cannot be taken seriously. Feuerbach's reduction of philosophy to anthropology means that he can no longer look to earlier philosophy for support. He has to strike out on his own.²⁰

I think, nonetheless, there lives on in Feuerbach an independent Kantian strain. One possible source of this Kantian spirit was Feuerbach's own father, Paul Johann Anselm von Feuerbach. A distinguished jurist and judge, he was profoundly influenced by Kant's philosophy and sought to implement it in his juridical writings and his social and political life. Ludwig Feuerbach was the product of a Kantian home and educational environment. He was brought up in a home where the parents sought to implement Kantian ideals in practice. Possibly this is what accounts for the strong parallels between Feuerbach's humanistic critique of Christianity and Kant's account of religion within the limits of mere reason.

¹⁹ Marx Wartofsky, *Feuerbach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 2.

²⁰ I think this global rejection of academic philosophy was a mistake. It relieved Feuerbach of the need to give a systematic justification of his own position. This had dire consequences for his later ethics.

The Symbolic Dimension and the Politics of Left Hegelianism

Warren Breckman

One of the many divisions between Hegel and his Romantic contemporaries was over the status of the symbolic. For the Romantics, the symbol is the perfect fusion of form and content. As F. W. J. Schelling wrote, the symbol is the “synthesis” of the particular and the general, in “which the general does not signify the particular nor does the particular signify the general, but in which the two are absolutely one.”¹ The symbolic expressed the Romantics’ paradoxical quest for the unity of the perfectly individual with the fully universal, their contradictory yearning for both the fullest possible presence of meaning and the inexpressible, unapproachable, and inscrutable. The symbol, to cite Schelling once again, creates an “inner bond uniting art and religion,” and further, the symbol establishes the philosophy of art “as the necessary goal of the philosopher, who in art views the inner essence of his own discipline as if in a magic and symbolic mirror.”² Hegel, by contrast, judged the symbol to be inadequate for philosophy, preferring the linguistic sign as the privileged medium of the science of the concept. According to him, a symbol conveys its meaning through the presentation of some quality or qualities that it has in common with that meaning. By contrast, the specific virtue of the sign is precisely its arbitrariness. Because its capacity to

¹ F. W. J. Schelling, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 5 (Stuttgart and Augsburg: Cotta, 1856), 407.

² Schelling, “The Philosophy of Art,” *Continental Aesthetics. Romanticism to Postmodernism. An Anthology*, eds. Richard Kearney and David Rasmussen (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 130.

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convey meaning depends only on convention and agreement, the sign could be purged of the naturalness and intuitiveness that linger in the symbol. It could shed the ambiguity of the symbol and become the transparent mediation of spirit's self-determination. The tension between the sign and the symbol opens the heart of the conflict between Hegel and the Romantics.

We are accustomed to regarding the Left or Young Hegelians as the radical heirs of Hegel's opposition to Romanticism and the Romantic taste for the ineffable, unmasterable, and mysterious. And indeed, figures like Heinrich Heine, Arnold Ruge, Theodor Echtermeyer, and Theodor Vischer perpetuated Hegel's animus towards Romanticism well into the mid-nineteenth century. Yet the conflict between Romanticism and Hegelianism persisted in a different and more subtle form within Young Hegelianism itself. This is, I hope to show, evident in the divergent tracks taken by Bruno Bauer and Ludwig Feuerbach. Where Bauer's philosophy of self-consciousness radicalised Hegel's emphasis upon the potential transparency of language and meaning, Feuerbach's naturalism led him towards a stance in which the Hegelian schema of the subject's appropriation of meaning contended with the reintroduction of the symbolic dimension. This was a more conflicted position than Bauer's. But, I will argue, it opens richer possibilities for conceptualising the link between philosophical meaning and emancipatory politics.

To substantiate these claims, I will begin by contrasting Bauer's and Feuerbach's approaches to the critique of religion. Writing in 1844, Bruno Bauer observed that the radical movement of Young Hegelianism had followed a pattern familiar in Germany, where revolutionary agitation and struggle played themselves out as literary phenomena.³ Bauer intended that as a criticism, much in the spirit of Marx's remark from the same year that "in politics, the Germans *thought* what other nations *did*."⁴ However, if we take Bauer's claim seriously, then the notion that Young Hegelianism was a *literary* phenomenon ultimately rests on the fact that its radical politics began as a critique of religion. That meant, first and foremost, the criticism of religious texts. Insofar as Young Hegelianism may thus be understood as a practice of textual criticism, it seems necessary to explore Bauer's and Feuerbach's governing assumptions about

³ Bauer, "Was ist jetzt der Gegenstand der Kritik?" *Feldzüge der reinen Kritik*, ed. Hans-Martin Sass (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1968), 201.

⁴ Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*: Introduction," *Collected Works* (New York: International Publishers, 1975), 181.

referentiality and representation in the biblical text. That examination will open the broader question of the status of the sign and symbol in Bauer and Feuerbach. From there, finally, I will consider the political significance of their assumptions about the symbolic.

I

The point of departure for Young Hegelian biblical criticism was Hegel's claim that religion apprehends truth through representation, through sensuous imagery rather than abstract concepts. This claim bears on a further distinction between symbol and sign. As the constellation of issues surrounding the terms *symbol* and *sign* will be of significance to the discussion of Feuerbach and Bauer, it is necessary to return to the issues mentioned briefly above and to explore their meaning in Hegel and his contemporaries.

As Kathleen Dow Magnus writes, "Hegel defines the act of symbolization as the imagination's use of sensuous appearances or images to represent by analogy conceptions '*of another kind*'; the symbol conveys a meaning through the presentation of some quality or qualities that it has in common with that meaning. The sign, by contrast, presents its meaning through an 'arbitrary connection' with it." The sign and the symbol each has a meaning that is different from its immediate sensible expression. However, where the symbol is both identical to and different from its meaning, the sign expresses its meaning through an indifference to its expression. The symbols *lion* and *fox*, for example, work because they "themselves possess the very qualities whose meaning they are supposed to express."⁵ By contrast, signs work precisely through the indifference of the connection between their meaning and their immediate sensible expression – hence, both the arbitrariness and the efficiency of *Fuchs*, *fox*, *renard*. The nature of symbols establishes a connection between art and religion in Hegel's thought. As he writes, "In the case of art, we cannot consider, in the symbol, the arbitrariness between meaning and signification [which characterises the sign], since art itself consists precisely in the connection, the affinity and the concrete interpretation of meaning and of form."⁶ Likewise, as Magnus notes, religious consciousness tends

⁵ Kathleen Dow Magnus, *Hegel and the Symbolic Mediation of Spirit* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2001), 39.

⁶ Hegel quoted in Paul de Man, "Sign and Symbol in Hegel's *Aesthetics*," *Critical Inquiry*, 8 (Summer 1982), 763–4.

towards symbolisation. It assigns a “*general meaning or conception to immediacies*” that have something in common with that general meaning without being identical to it. It “*communicates its meaning ambiguously* because it does not clarify the basis or limitation of the identification it asserts.” And, finally, religious consciousness “in one way or another *sustains a divergence between its form and its meaning*, its activity of representation and the object it seeks to represent.”⁷

In drawing this connection between religion and art, Hegel shared, in some ways, the impulse of his Romantic contemporaries to carry over the concept of *symbol* from religion to art.⁸ The symbol held something of an absolute status for the Romantics. In this sense, they accentuated a change in German aesthetic discourse already observable in classicist predecessors like Karl Phillip Moritz and Goethe. Moritz articulated a notion of the beautiful object as the *in sich vollendet*, that which is perfect in itself. “An authentic work of art,” wrote Moritz, “a beautiful poem, is something finished and completed in itself, something that exists for itself, and whose value lies in itself, and in the ordered relationship of its parts.”⁹ The beautiful cannot be translated into another medium, and it is, as Tzvetan Todorov emphasises, radically “intransitive”: “The beautiful object does not require an end outside itself, for it is so perfected in itself that the entire purpose of its existence is found in itself.”¹⁰ Goethe formalised this ideal of the beautiful in his concept of the symbol. “True symbolism,” wrote Goethe in 1797, “is where the particular represents the more general, not as a dream or a shadow, but as a living momentary revelation of the Inscrutable.”¹¹

Both Moritz and Goethe articulated their ideal through a contrast to allegory. Where the Baroque period has been called the climactic age of the allegory, by the later eighteenth century, critics had attacked

⁷ Magnus, *Hegel and the Symbolic Mediation of Spirit*, 180.

⁸ On the Romantics, see Susanne Lanwerd, *Religionsästhetik. Studien zum Verhältnis von Symbol und Sinnlichkeit* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2002), 16.

⁹ Moritz quoted in Tzvetan Todorov, *Theories of the Symbol*, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1982), p. 162.

¹⁰ Moritz quoted in Todorov, *Theories of the Symbol*, 156. For an interesting attempt to explain the emergence of *Autonomieästhetik* through the sociological position of authors in the later eighteenth century and the operations of the marketplace, see Martha Woodmansee, *The Author, Art, and the Market. Rereading the History of Aesthetics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), esp. ch. 1.

¹¹ J. W. von Goethe, “Maximen und Reflexionen,” *Werke. Bd. XII: Schriften zur Kunst. Schriften zur Literatur. Maximen und Reflexionen*, eds. Erich Trunz and Hans Joachim Schrimpf (München: C. H. Beck, 1994), 471.

allegory for various reasons, some of them diametrically opposed. So, for Gottsched, allegory's reliance upon the sensuous embodiment of ideas means that allegory appeals to the senses and so is not sufficiently rational, while Lessing maintained that because allegory relies upon a system of conventional signs – the blindfold signifying justice, for example – that is understood cerebrally, it cannot generate an affective response to art.¹² A new basis for the critique of allegory emerged with Goethe and Moritz's *Autonomieästhetik*. Allegory, in this view, represents a mechanical and self-conscious way of connecting the particular and the general. In creating an allegory, the poet seeks a particularity to typify a generality, thus the particular serves merely to exemplify the general. By contrast, Goethe argued, the very nature of poetry lies in its expression of the particular, without thinking of or referring to a universal. To grasp this particular in a truly lively way, however, is also to come into contact with the general, though without awareness or, at most, with awareness that emerges only in reflection. "The allegory," wrote Goethe, "changes the phenomenon into a concept, the concept into an image, in such a way that the concept is always limited and complete in the image and expressed in the image." The symbolic, by contrast, "changes the phenomenon into an idea, the idea into an image, such that the idea remains always infinitely active and unapproachable in the image, and will remain inexpressible even if expressed in all languages."¹³

Goethe's sharp distinction between allegory and symbol tended to break down as the Romantics picked up these ideas. So, for example, Schelling articulated a dialectical form, with symbol serving to reconcile two opposed terms. Where *Schematismus* signifies the particular through the general and *Allegorie* signifies the general through the particular, "the synthesis of the two, in which the general does not signify the particular nor does the particular signify the general, but in which the two are absolutely one, is the *symbolic*."¹⁴ The symbol, in Schelling's use, establishes a relationship of identity, not simply of signification, between the

¹² Ulrike Morgner, 'Das Wort aber ist Fleisch geworden'. *Allegorie und Allegoriekritik im 18. Jahrhundert am Beispiel von K.Ph. Moritz' 'Andreas Hartknopf. Eine Allegorie'* (Wurzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2002), 14–15.

¹³ Goethe, "Maximen und Reflexionen," 471, 470.

¹⁴ F. W. J. Schelling, *Sämtliche Werke*, 407. Schelling's use of "Schematismus" draws on Kant's distinction between schematic and symbolic, and it was significant for the Romantics that Kant makes this distinction in his discussion of our knowledge of God. "All our knowledge of God is purely symbolical; and he who regards it as schematical, along with the properties of understanding, will, etc., which only establish their objective reality in beings of this world, falls into anthropomorphism." Kant quoted in Alain Besançon,

general and the particular. The symbol *is* what it signifies. "We must not say, for example, that Jupiter or Minerva *signify* or *must* signify that. In so doing we would have canceled out all the poetic independence of these figures. They do not signify, they *are* the thing itself." Likewise: "Thus Mary Magdalen does not only *signify* repentance, but is living repentance itself. Thus the image of Saint Cecilia, the patron saint of music, is not an allegorical image but a symbolic one, since it exists independently of signification without losing its signification."¹⁵ Symbolist doctrine became a crucial element of Schelling's *Identitätsphilosophie*, because the symbol held the promise of overcoming the dualism of the finite and the infinite, meaning and being.¹⁶ Karl Phillip Moritz was in some ways a more extreme thinker. His theory insists on such a radical autonomy of the artwork that the symbol functions precisely by *not* signifying, a concept that anticipates in principle if not yet in practice the hermetic creed of late-nineteenth-century French symbolists. For Schelling, in true Romantic fashion, the symbol combines opposites insofar as it is both itself *and* its capacity to signify something other.

The ideal of fusion and identity found in Schelling's notion of the symbol has led some critics of Romanticism, notably Walter Benjamin and Paul de Man, to defend allegory as nondialectical, disruptive, and discontinuous, accentuating by its conventionality the gap between meaning and being. Indeed, some have even declared that we live in an "allegorical age," insofar as allegory seems to have an elective affinity to the postmodern sensibility.¹⁷ In fact, however, this valorisation of the allegorical at the expense of the Romantics overstates the Romantics' confidence about the symbolic. Where Goethe and Moritz believed that the symbol was a demonstrable perfection achieved in the greatest artworks, the Romantics tended to see the symbol as a condition of harmony and reconciliation that eluded the present. The symbol marked a lost past and an ideal future. Even Schelling argued that the ancient Greeks had been able to create symbols of the infinite, whereas Christianity, with its division of the world from the divine, could present only allegories of the infinite. Moreover, the modern commitment to originality and change made the

The Forbidden Image. An Intellectual History of Iconoclasm, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 200.

¹⁵ Schelling, *Sämmtliche Werke*, vol. 5, 452–53 and 555.

¹⁶ See in particular the discussion in Nicholas Halmi, "An Anthropological Approach to the Romantic Symbol," *European Romantic Review*, 4:1 (Summer 1993), esp. 14–16.

¹⁷ See Gail Day, "Allegory. Between Deconstruction and Dialectics," *Oxford Art Journal*, 22:1 (1999), 103.

symbol impossible in our age, for the symbol presupposes the constancy of a shared thought system.¹⁸ The symbol formed a cable in a temporal span suspended between the poles of recollection and imaginative invention. The Romantics typically saw this bridge expanding infinitely in both directions. The Romantics strove for the symbol, but they were always underway towards it. Hence, they understood the present age as the prolegomenon to the *in sich vollendet*, the perfectly completed work. In the case of Friedrich Schlegel, who disregarded Goethe's terminological distinction by treating symbol and allegory as synonymous, the Christian narrative meant that the symbol awaited the end of days, and until then, the mediation of God and world could be achieved only indirectly. Allegory thus becomes the appropriate form of representation: "All beauty is allegory. One can only express the highest allegorically, precisely because it is inexpressible."¹⁹ By allegory, it must be emphasised, Schlegel did not mean to designate a rhetorical trope or didactic device but rather the ontological situation of human beings and their systems of meaning. A similar claim for the disruption of symbolic meaning is found in Novalis, for whom "the world's meaning has been lost."²⁰ For him, the symbol functions as a hieroglyph, gesturing towards a totality no longer understood in Goethe's and Moritz's terms as the perfected work of art but as the numinous interpenetration of divinity and the world. Novalis thus imagined that the symbolic relationships constituting art paved the royal road to the recovery of meaning. However, because the symbol's ultimate pretext is the numinous, neither Schlegel nor Novalis believed that the symbol could be exhaustively decoded or understood.²¹ The dream of wholeness and fusion that Benjamin criticised in the Romantics was, perhaps, better attributed to the German classicists; as for the Romantics, the symbol may have been the ideal, but allegory was the condition of modernity.

The Romantic concern for the symbolic intuition of divinity was far removed from Hegel's sympathies. For Hegel, the Romantics' "nebulous representation of the ideal" exemplified their flight from the world into the extremes of subjectivity.²² Where the symbol and the

¹⁸ Michael Titzmann, *Strukturwandel der philosophischen Ästhetik 1800–1880. Der Symbolbegriff als Paradigma* (München: Fink, 1978), 113.

¹⁹ Schlegel quoted in Morgner, 'Das Wort aber ist Fleisch geworden', 36.

²⁰ Novalis quoted in Halmi, "An Anthropological Approach to the Romantic Symbol," 17.

²¹ Morgner, 'Das Wort aber ist Fleisch geworden', 36.

²² Hegel quoted in Ingrid Pepperle, *Junghegelianische Geschichtsphilosophie und Kunsttheorie* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1978), 145.

allegory – whether as opposed terms or as synonyms – preoccupied Romantic theorists, the distinction between symbol and sign was of far greater importance for Hegel. Indeed, Hegel presented allegory as a type of “conscious symbolism,” a rhetorical form ranked with riddles, metaphors, images, and similes as modes of comparison. At one level, Hegel’s lack of concern with the contrast between symbol and allegory may reflect the fact that these terms never became fixed in the contemporary debate. The Romantics themselves were not consistent in their usage, a lack of clarity that may be explained not only by the dependence of the concept of the symbolic upon the intrinsically murky categories of the intuition but also by the fact that both symbols and allegories ultimately have a common identity as forms of sensuous imagery or as indirect representations of concepts by analogy. Yet at another level, Hegel’s treatment of allegory and symbol underscores the greater significance he assigned to the distinction between sign and symbol. To recall an earlier point, the sensuous form of symbolic expression introduces ambiguity, in that the sensible expression does not fully coincide with its meaning. For example, *mountain* could symbolise sublimity or self-transcendence, but it could also mean obstacle or peril. The sign, by contrast, signifies only by convention. Its sensible expression has no value outside of the agreement that establishes a link between expression and meaning. Precisely by negating the significance of the relationship between meaning and the form of its presentation, the sign is able to mark identities and differences within a system of meaning. Purged of naturalness or intuition, the relationship between its expression and meaning clarified and explicit, the sign sheds the ambiguity of the symbol and exists only in its ability to signify. The sign is thus the privileged medium for philosophy, the science of the concept.

Where the Romantic Schelling believed that art has the permanent task of teaching the philosopher to “recognise symbolically the way sensual things” emerge from the “true archetypes of forms,” Hegelian philosophy was premised on the progression from symbols to signs – hence, Hegel’s famous and notorious claim that art is for us a thing of the past, meaning presumably that modern consciousness no longer has access to truly symbolic forms of art, insofar as symbolism is no longer an adequate sensory manifestation of the idea. A similar logic governs his treatment of symbolisation in religion. A succession of “finite religions,” such as Hinduism, Judaism, and Greek polytheism, created a series of sensuous forms of the divine that allowed human subjectivity to establish identifications with the otherness of the divine, even if the forms of that

identification did not yet permit the self-conscious recognition of the unity of the human and the divine. To be sure, in Christianity, the “absolute religion” wherein God is “*thought of as self-consciousness*” and hence the self “*beholds itself in the object*,”²³ Hegel does see a continued role for the symbolic. However, because Christian symbols – most notably Christ himself – correspond to the structure of the Idea, symbols incline the Christian to reflect on the unity in difference of his own subjectivity and the divine as a moment of the self-relation of Spirit.²⁴ Religious consciousness thus moves towards philosophical consciousness, the symbol towards the sign. Where both the classicist and romantic champions of the symbol insisted on its untranslatability and its radical intransitivity, Hegel’s treatment is predicated precisely on the claim that the symbol is both translatable and transitive.

II

As we turn to the Young Hegelians, two preliminary remarks may be drawn from the preceding discussion. First, for David Friedrich Strauss, Bruno Bauer, and Ludwig Feuerbach, the Romantic distinction between symbol and allegory seems to have had little significance. Rather, they tended to follow Hegel in treating allegory as a form of symbolic consciousness. Indeed, Young Hegelians used the terms *allegory* and *symbol* interchangeably and with less conceptual rigor than either the Romantics or Hegel. Accordingly, in my treatment of the Young Hegelians, I will not insist on the distinction between these terms but will use them as roughly equal terms designating the activity of symbolic representation. While much of the specific conceptual weight of the symbol and the allegory was lost in the debates of the Young Hegelians, Hegel’s distinction between the sign and the symbol was by contrast of far greater significance to them. Here it must quickly be said that the Young Hegelians did not explicitly, let alone rigorously, thematise this distinction. Nor to my knowledge did any of them deepen the Hegelian approach to this specific question. The distinction between sign and symbol was important more for the bedrock assumptions it entailed than for the conceptual clarity it might have brought to the discussion of religion and art.

²³ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 417.

²⁴ See Magnus, *Hegel and the Symbolic Mediation of Spirit*, 198. I have discussed this at greater length in Warren Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory. Dethroning the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 32–41.

What of the question of textual reference and representation in the biblical criticism of the Young Hegelians? Hegel's opposition between representation and concept authorised the dismantling of conventional schemes of biblical referentiality. Most dramatically, this meant the dissolution of the literal historical referent, which by the later eighteenth century had become the hermeneutical model of biblical interpretation for orthodox defenders of the Bible and skeptical Enlightenment critics alike.²⁵ David Friedrich Strauss's 1835 *Das Leben Jesu* launched this trajectory by arguing that the Christian gospels were products of the *Volksgeist* of the ancient Hebrews, a hermeneutical position that absorbed both event and author into a collective mythological consciousness. Strauss was here building on eighteenth-century predecessors like Herder and De Wette, who had already argued that the Old Testament was the product of Jewish myth, but Strauss went much further, not only by applying a mythological argument to the New Testament but also by arguing that everything in the gospels is mythical. This dealt a serious blow to supernaturalist theologians who read the Bible as a true and literal historical record of the divine participation in human affairs. It struck as well at rationalist Christian apologists who accepted the historical veracity of the biblical account but sought to explain away its more incredible episodes by recourse to natural causes. Strauss's strategy, finally, undermined the long tradition of allegorical reading that discovered multiple levels of meaning in the Bible, for example Cassian's influential fourth-century account of the fourfold levels of meaning: the literal, the sacred historical or typological, the ethical, and the eschatological. Strauss acknowledged that the allegorical mode of interpretation coincides with his own mythical approach "in relinquishing the historical reality of the sacred narratives in order to preserve to them absolute inherent truth." Yet, Strauss quickly identified a crucial difference between the two approaches. The allegorical approach attributes the inspiration and truth of the narrative to be the "immediate divine agency," whereas the mythical traces inspiration and truth back to the "spirit of a people or a community."²⁶ This distinction became blurred in the conclusion of *Das Leben Jesu*. There Strauss turned from the negative task of criticising the historical claims of the New

²⁵ See Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative. A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1974), chapter 7. See also David Aram Kaiser, "The Incarnated Symbol. Coleridge, Hegel, Strauss, and the Higher Biblical Criticism," *European Romantic Review*, 4:2 (Winter 1994), 134–5.

²⁶ Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, fourth edition, vol. 1, trans. George Eliot (London: Thoemmes Press, 1998), 48.

Testament to the positive task of discerning the true spiritual meaning of scripture by reflecting upon the doctrinal significance of his critical life of Jesus. Indeed, Strauss offers what we might call an inverted allegorical reading as his mythical interpretation passes over into an exercise in Hegelian speculative reason. Arguing that God and man, the infinite and the finite, are complete only in each other, Strauss proceeds to deduce the *necessity* of the historical narrative of the God-Man from the conceptual truth of the union of human and divine natures. Deep meaning yields the surface narrative, an allegory in reverse. Reading Strauss today, it is difficult not to recall Heinrich Heine's exasperated observation that Kant's critical defence of belief in God reminded him of his student friend who smashed all the lamps in the city in order to lecture on the need for street lamps.

Under relentless attack from his many orthodox critics, Strauss retreated somewhat in subsequent editions of *Das Leben Jesu* from his initial assertion that every element of the biblical narrative is mythical. Nonetheless, the rejection of historical referentiality remained the bedrock of Young Hegelian biblical criticism. However, once the linguistic sign was detached from its conventional referent, the question of true reference became a matter of sharp debate, with Bruno Bauer and Ludwig Feuerbach defining the two most radical post-Straussian positions. Bauer's evolution from a staunch defender of the accommodation between Hegelianism and orthodox Christianity to militant Hegelian atheist may be traced through his unfolding critique of Strauss.²⁷ The details of that engagement from Bauer's 1835 reviews of *Das Leben Jesu* through *Die Religion des Alten Testaments* (1838), *Kritik der evangelischen Geschichte des Johannes* (1840), and *Kritik der evangelischen Geschichte der Synoptiker* (1841) cannot detain us here, except to repeat the frequently made observation that the continuous theme in these works is the role of human self-consciousness in its relationship to the infinite. However, where Bauer's early position centered on the "process of the subjective spirit which relates to God" – that is, the understanding of God by the

²⁷ The most comprehensive exploration of Bauer's thought is now Douglas Moggach, *The Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Moggach's important book appeared too late to be reflected in the pages of the present article. I discuss the differences in our interpretations of Bauer in a lengthy review to appear in the *European Journal of Philosophy* in early 2006. For an extensive selection of writings from Strauss's critics, including several of Bauer's articles on Strauss, see Warren Breckman, ed., *David Friedrich Strauss's Leben Jesu in the Nineteenth Century*, 6 vols. (London: Thoemmes-Continuum, forthcoming).

subjective spirit²⁸ – by 1841 he had arrived at the conclusion that religion is “nothing more than an inward relationship of self-consciousness to itself.”²⁹ I want to confine my remarks to this most radical and influential stage of Bauer’s development, which found its fullest expression in his critique of the Synoptic Gospels. I will focus mainly on the extremely interesting preface to that work, which lays out Bauer’s objection to Strauss and his alternative reading strategy.

In Bauer’s view, Strauss’s idea of a collective mythical consciousness is as alienating as the orthodox idea of revelation, for in both cases a transcendent explanation of the Scriptures conceals their true origin in human self-consciousness. In contrast, Bauer argued that the Synoptic Gospels were, in both form and content, the inventions of individual authors responding freely and pragmatically to the needs of their age. Bauer’s insistence that individual authors created both the form *and* the content of scripture was a dramatic departure from Strauss, as well as from those critical biblical scholars like Christian Gottlob Wilke, who had been willing to concede that humans had invented the Bible’s literary forms but not the divinely revealed content. It enabled Bauer to claim that the Scriptures are through and through “artistic” compositions, and that both form and content were freely given by self-consciousness in accordance with the principles of authorship, even if self-consciousness did not recognise its own creativity at that stage in history.³⁰ The author’s creation of both form and content, Bauer wrote, meant that there was no access to a “given and naked reality” outside the text.³¹ Reference becomes a circular movement within the text itself, which now contains the signifier and the signified wholly within it. This would seem to link Bauer both backwards to Karl Phillip Moritz’s *Autonomieästhetik* and forwards to Jacques Derrida’s claim that there is nothing outside the text. Yet both associations need careful qualification. The relationship between Moritz and Bauer has yet to be explored in any depth, even though the last essay published in his lifetime was devoted to Moritz, and Ernst Barnikol reports that Moritz was Bauer’s favorite author.³² This connection warrants investigation, but at

²⁸ Quoted in Zvi Rosen, *Bruno Bauer and Karl Marx. The Influence of Bruno Bauer on Marx’s Thought* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1977), 39.

²⁹ Bauer, *The Trumpet of the Last Judgement Against Hegel the Atheist and Antichrist*, trans. L. Stepelevich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 97.

³⁰ Bauer, *Kritik der evangelischen Geschichte der Synoptiker*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Wigand, 1841), xiv–xv.

³¹ Bauer, *Synoptiker*, xv.

³² Ernst Barnikol, *Bruno Bauer. Studien und Materialien* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1972), 437.

present it must suffice to assert that Bauer, like Hegel, would not have accepted Moritz's insistence on the radical intransitivity and untranslatability of the work of art. As for Derrida, Bauer would have had no patience for Derrida's radical skepticism about the capacity of language to serve as a transparent sign for thought. Indeed, far from either the self-contained wholeness of the work of art implied by Moritz or the displacement of referentiality along a chain of signifiers implied by Derrida, Bauer believed that the referent of the biblical text is in fact the self-consciousness itself as it moves through history towards final recognition of itself as the "only power of the world and history."³³ As religious self-consciousness, writes Bauer, the spirit is entirely gripped by the content of its own productions,

cannot live without it, and without its continuous description and production, for it possesses in this activity the experience of its own determination. But as religious consciousness it perceives itself at the same time in complete differentiation from its own essential content, and as soon as it has developed it, and in the same moment that it develops and describes it, this essential content becomes for it a reality that exists for itself, above and outside religious consciousness, as the absolute and its history.³⁴

The contrast here between manifest and essential content might look like a return to the allegorical mode, but it is not. For as Bauer claims towards the end of the preface to the *Kritik der evangelischen Geschichte der Synoptiker*, the process of critique collapses the distinction between the content and the self-consciousness. There is no positivity in the text, no remainder. Or, to use Derrida's terminology, the materiality of the sign is effaced, because there is no slippage of meaning, no historical association or symbolic ambiguity that cannot be penetrated and mastered. Even with the case of the alienated self-consciousness that composed the scriptural text, self-consciousness recognises something "homogeneous" with itself.³⁵ There is then no process of negotiation between signs and meaning, only the self-relation of a self-consciousness whose essential content is not its products but its own productivity. Such transparency is the antithesis of the allegorical sensibility, which, if we follow Walter Benjamin, experiences the text and indeed the world as fragmentary and enigmatic, an aggregation of signs that adumbrate a truth that resides elsewhere.

³³ Bauer, *Trumpet*, 115.

³⁴ Bauer quoted in John E. Toews, *Hegelianism. The Path Toward Dialectical Humanism, 1805–1841* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 322.

³⁵ Bauer, *Synoptiker*, xvi.

Allegory is literally “other-discourse,” meaning that truth is, at most, “bodied forth in the dance of represented ideas.”³⁶ By contrast, Bauer’s critical assault on the gospels as well as on Strauss’s mythical reading was motivated by his belief that “personality, reality and everything positive can in fact be gobbled up and consumed by the Hegelian idea.”³⁷ Against critics who charged that he was animated only by the spirit of destruction, Bauer insisted in 1842 that “we fight for the honour and freedom of the positive, when we recognise and prove that it springs from the noblest thing there is, the historical self-consciousness.”³⁸

Feuerbach’s *Das Wesen des Christentums* appeared in the same year as Bauer’s *Kritik der evangelischen Geschichte der Synoptiker*. The two works share an emphasis on the development of human self-consciousness in relationship to religion; yet as both Feuerbach and Bauer recognised, they differed over the meaning of religion. Where Bauer regarded humanity’s subjection to religious illusions as totally debasing, Feuerbach viewed religious feeling as alienated human species-being. Whereas Bauer sought to dissolve religious illusion, Feuerbach sought to return the projections of religion to their source in humanity, to restore the predicates of religious consciousness to their proper subject – man – and thereby to transform religious devotion into humanist devotion. Not surprisingly, Bauer denounced Feuerbach as a mystic and argued that the notion of species-being replicates the structure of theism insofar as it subordinates free self-consciousness to a substance that precedes and defines it.³⁹ As Bauer wrote in “Die Gattung und die Masse,” “The essence which [man] does not make . . . is rather the expression of his weakness. The truly human in him would thereby be a barrier which is unattainable for him. His perfections, which confront him as hypostases or as dogmas, could at most be only the object of a cult or a faith. . . .”⁴⁰

Feuerbach, for his part, maintained in the preface to the second edition of *Das Wesen des Christentums* that “Bauer takes for the object of his criticism the evangelical history, i.e., biblical Christianity, or rather biblical

³⁶ Walter Benjamin quoted in Bainard Cowan, “Walter Benjamin’s Theory of Allegory,” *New German Critique* (Winter 1981), 114.

³⁷ Bauer, *Trumpet*, 67.

³⁸ Bauer, “Die gute Sache der Freiheit und meine eigene Angelegenheit,” *Die Hegelsche Linke*, eds. Ingrid Pepperle and Heinz Pepperle (Leipzig: P. Reclam, 1985), 496.

³⁹ Bauer, “Charakteristik Ludwig Feuerbachs,” *Wigands Vierteljahrsschrift* (Leipzig: O. Wigand, 1845), 91. Regarding the charge of “substance,” see esp. 105–11.

⁴⁰ Bauer, “The Genus and the Crowd,” *The Philosophical Forum*, 8:2–4 (1978), 129.

theology.”⁴¹ Two implicit criticisms are embedded in this comment. First, Feuerbach always drew a sharp line between theology and the essence of faith; where faith expresses emotional and psychological needs that in themselves are authentic, even if misplaced, theology is an abstract discourse that distorts the content of faith and distances religion from its emotional core. So from Feuerbach’s perspective, Bauer’s focus on the intellectual discourse of biblical theology obstructed his access to the essence of religion. Second, Bauer’s exclusive focus on the theological text replicated what Feuerbach had come to regard as Hegel’s greatest fault, namely, his identification of thought and being, or as Feuerbach insisted in his 1839 critique of Hegel, his confusion of the form or rhetoric of philosophy with the thing itself.⁴² In contrast to Bauer, Feuerbach insisted that his object “is Christianity, is Religion, as it is the *immediate object*, the *immediate nature*, of man.” Religion as an object of reflection and intellection comes afterwards only, hence Feuerbach’s division of *Das Wesen des Christentums* into a first section dealing with “The True or Anthropological Essence of Religion” and a second section treating “The False or Theological Essence of Religion.”

Another way to put this is that in Feuerbach’s view, Bauer operated as if there is nothing outside the text, or at least no truth that is not textual, which in Bauer’s view is the privileged site of self-consciousness’s creative self-realisation. In contrast, Feuerbach insisted that his position does not “regard the *pen* as the only fit organ for the revelation of truth, but the eye and the ear, the hand and the foot; it does not identify the *idea* of the fact with the fact itself, so as to reduce the real existence to an existence on paper, but it separates the two, and precisely by this separation attains to the *fact itself*.”⁴³ The line drawn between representation and the object itself, between thought and being, had been a feature of Feuerbach’s thought since he jotted down some doubts about Hegel’s logic in 1828. By the time he wrote his critique of Hegel in 1839, it had become a central motif of his thought. Feuerbach may well have formulated this critique under the influence of the later thought of Schelling, whose so-called “positive philosophy” had exercised such a complex and multivalent influence on the intellectual history of the 1830s.⁴⁴ At the basis

⁴¹ Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. George Eliot (New York: Harper, 1957), xlii.

⁴² Feuerbach, “Towards a Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy,” in *The Fiery Brook. Selected Writings of Ludwig Feuerbach*, trans. Zawar Hanfi (New York: Anchor Books, 1972).

⁴³ Feuerbach, *Essence*, xxxv.

⁴⁴ For the argument that Feuerbach was profoundly influenced by Schelling, see Manfred Frank, *Der unendliche Mangel an Sein. Schellings Hegelkritik und die Anfänge der Marxschen*

of positive philosophy was the claim that dialectical philosophy falsely collapsed being and consciousness into an identity. Schelling insisted on their non-identity. Rather than seeing the *Unaufhebbarkeit*, or unassimilability of being as a restriction on human freedom, however, he argued that precisely the gap between being and thought generates an unending open movement that resists closure in self-consciousness.

Whether or not Schelling was instrumental in Feuerbach's critique of dialectical logic, Feuerbach's recognition of the non-identity of thought and being was a crucial impetus towards his attempt to construct a philosophy based on naturalism and sensuousness. He extended the principle of non-identity into his attempt to rethink the human subject as an embodied subject. This effort formed the center of gravity in his 1843 *Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft*, in which he wrote that "Whereas the old philosophy started by saying, 'I am an abstract and merely a thinking being to whose essence the body does not belong,' the new philosophy, on the other hand, begins by saying, 'I am a real, sensuous being and, indeed, the body in its totality is my ego, my essence itself.'" ⁴⁵ In the 1841 *Das Wesen des Christentums*, the idea of embodied subjectivity was already present in Feuerbach's emphasis on the relationship of religious projections to humanity's sensuous needs, from carnal love to creaturely appetite. Yet here, three qualifications are called for. First, as Van Harvey has recently emphasised, what he calls the "existentialist-naturalist" strand of Feuerbach's religious critique coexists uncomfortably with a "three-fold Hegelian schema of self-knowledge: objectification-alienation-reappropriation." ⁴⁶ Second, embodiment has ambiguous consequences for Feuerbach's theory of knowledge. For although sensuousness disrupts the closed circuit of a mediation between thought and being that happens one-sidedly in the dimension of thought, sensuousness opens the pathway towards more immediate, intuitive forms of knowledge. Hence, for Feuerbach, the "whole man," the man of "reason, love, and will," becomes the subject of a deeper, fuller knowledge than the thin conceptual knowledge accessible to the abstract self-consciousness of Hegel or Bauer. If Bauer's biblical criticism drove the

Dialektik, (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1975). For a discussion that emphasises Feuerbach's critical distance from Schelling and positive philosophy, see Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory*, 119–30.

⁴⁵ Feuerbach, *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Manfred Vogel (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1986), 54.

⁴⁶ Van A. Harvey, *Feuerbach and the Interpretation of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), esp. 68ff.

referent of language from history into the text, Feuerbach's religious criticism is not immune to the dream of bypassing the text in order to reach an anthropological core where language and activity are fused in the immediacy of human life. Indeed, he presented his humanist naturalism as a vital corrective to "the present age, which prefers the sign to the thing signified, the copy to the original."⁴⁷ Third, recognition of sensuous species-being was meant to bring the attributes of a transcendent divinity down into the immanent existence of humanity. However, Feuerbach was unable to balance this drive towards immanence against the return of the transcendent in the form of species-being itself. This was the burden of Bruno Bauer's charge that Feuerbach's concept of species acts as a surrogate god. In Derrida's language, we might say that the species furnishes a new transcendental signified. An observation made by Marcel Gauchet about a general tendency of the modern secularisation process seems particularly appropriate to this ambiguous aspect of Feuerbach: "It is as if the principle of collective order could only be returned to humans, to the visible, by setting up the invisible at the heart of the human order. It is as if we had to be dispossessed by collective-being's terrestrial transcendence if we were to be delivered from heaven's will. This is a remarkable example of realist fiction or effective symbolism."⁴⁸

III

Realist fiction or effective symbolism: The two are, arguably, not the same. Karl Barth, who viewed Feuerbach from a sharply critical if respectful distance, maintained that modernity suffers from the illusion of realism. In Barth's view, realism, in both its literary and philosophical forms, expresses the highest point of confidence in the ability to represent. "Modernity," writes a student of Barth, "might be understood as an epoch in which the stability of Being and representation, the essential unity of Being and representation, went unquestioned – an epoch of forgetting."⁴⁹ Barth consecrated his theology to warning against this forgetting – that is, to recollecting the paradox that humans "need to posit theologically an otherness which cannot be posited within systems of human

⁴⁷ Feuerbach, *Essence*, xxxix.

⁴⁸ Marcel Gauchet, *The Disenchantment of the World. A Political History of Religion*, trans. Oscar Burge (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), 90.

⁴⁹ Graham Ward, "Theology and the Crisis of Representation," *Literature and Theology at Century's End*, eds. Gregory Salyer and Robert Detweiler (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 136.

representation without undermining them.”⁵⁰ Certainly, despite Feuerbach’s insistence on the non-identity of thought and being, he may be judged guilty of a certain blindness about his own procedure. He spoke of a kind of immediate sensuous knowledge beyond and behind philosophical language without problematising the fact that he was representing this knowledge through philosophical language. Here again there is ambiguity, however. I would argue that Feuerbach’s thought rests on a gap between the necessity of representing the anthropological secret of religion textually and the claim that that truth lies beyond representation in a lifeworld constituted by the triangulated interactions of community, the embodied subject, and nature.

Rather than seeing Feuerbach exclusively as an instance of Barth’s realist illusion, I would argue that he represents a return to symbolic or allegorical styles of thought within Young Hegelianism. There is, first of all, his recognition that every system of thought or belief is a “presentation.” That is, it is a means or vehicle for ideas that it can at best approximate. Not only the content of the system, but the form as well constitute the presentation. It is striking that Feuerbach draws metaphorically on a different system of representation in order to accentuate the representational dimension of philosophy that the Hegelian tradition specifically denied: “. . . the systematiser is an artist – the history of philosophical systems is the picture gallery of reason. Hegel is the most accomplished philosophical artist, and his presentations, at least in part, are unsurpassed models of scientific art sense and, due to their rigor, *veritable means for the education and discipline of the spirit*.”⁵¹ Hedged with qualifications, I am reminded of Richard Rorty’s contrast between the image of philosophy as “a chain of arguments and building a single coherent edifice on demonstrable foundations” and philosophy as “edifying discourse,” offering “exemplary states of reflection, promising to take ‘us out of our solid selves by the power of strangeness, to aid us in becoming new beings.’”⁵² Despite the fact that Feuerbach was, to say the least, significantly more committed to foundations than Richard Rorty, the notion of presentation entwines philosophy’s task to make abstract arguments with its capacity to produce allegorical emblems of the examined life.

⁵⁰ Ward, “The Crisis of Representation,” 133.

⁵¹ Feuerbach, “Towards a Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy,” 68.

⁵² Rorty quoted in Charles Altieri, “Plato’s Performative Sublime and the Ends of Reading,” *Canons and Consequences. Reflections on the Ethical Force of Imaginative Ideals* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1990), 163.

Feuerbach returns to the symbolic in another way. In the preface to *Das Wesen des Christentums*, Feuerbach performed an interesting move. There, he explicitly repudiated the allegorical mode: “we should not, as is the case in theology and speculative philosophy, make real beings and things into arbitrary signs, vehicles, symbols, or predicates of a distinct, transcendent, absolute, i.e., abstract being.” Instead, Feuerbach urged that we take things for the “significance which they have in themselves, which is identical with their qualities, with those conditions which make them what they are. . . . I, in fact, put in place of the barren baptismal water, the beneficent effect of real water. How ‘watery,’ how trivial!”⁵³ This was indeed just the kind of thing that Karl Barth judged “extraordinarily, almost nauseatingly, trivial.”⁵⁴ However, Feuerbach proceeded to reintroduce the symbol: “But while I thus view water as a real thing, I at the same time intend it as a vehicle, an image, an example, a symbol, of the ‘unholy’ spirit of my work, just as the water of Baptism – the object of my analysis – is at once literal and symbolical water.”⁵⁵ Feuerbach thus passed from the religious symbolic to the real to a reinvocation of the symbolic as an irreducible dimension of naturalism. In the Romantics, to be sure, there was an impulse towards the naturalisation of the symbol. This is most notable in Novalis, for whom all things relate to everything else in such a way that nature and art are both symbolic. Yet, if nature is symbolic, for Novalis this could be only because nature is suffused with divinity. For Feuerbach, symbolism functions in an immanent, humanist context. So, for example, noting that humans are distinct from nature, he wrote, “The symbols of this our difference are bread and wine. Bread and wine are, as to their materials, products of Nature; as to their form, products of man.” Bread and wine, core symbols of Christianity, become the symbols of the transformative powers of human labour:

Bread and wine are supernatural products, – in the only valid and true sense, the sense which is not in contradiction with reason and Nature. If in water we adore the pure force of Nature, in bread and wine we adore the supernatural power of mind, of consciousness, of man. Hence this sacrament is only for man matured into consciousness; while baptism is imparted to infants. But we at the same time celebrate here the true relation of mind to Nature: Nature gives the material, mind gives the form. . . . Bread and wine typify to us the truth that Man is the true God and Saviour of man.⁵⁶

⁵³ Feuerbach, *Essence*, xl.

⁵⁴ Barth, “An Introductory Essay,” *Essence of Christianity*, xix.

⁵⁵ Feuerbach, *Essence*, xli.

⁵⁶ Feuerbach, *Essence*, 276–7.

Bruno Bauer, by contrast, argued that the movement of self-consciousness absorbs the symbol. For example, in *Die evangelische Landeskirche Preussens und die Wissenschaft*, Bauer writes of the union of the Lutheran and Calvinist churches under the presumed rationality of the Prussian state, which at that moment Bauer still believed was compatible with the development of free self-consciousness:

There is a oneness of the two churches which so strongly and thoroughly unites them that nothing can divide them. It is not symbols as such that form this oneness; if symbols are operative, then they separate, if the churches come together, then the symbols cease to have a binding effect. Wherein then does this unity lie? It lies in inwardness, into which the symbols have collapsed, in self-consciousness, into which the objective dogmatic consciousness has turned, in subjectivity.⁵⁷

Even more clearly, in his 1842 book *Hegel's Lehre von der Religion und Kunst*, Bauer finds support in Hegel himself, quoting him at length: "The symbolical ceases immediately when the free subjectivity, and no longer merely general abstract conceptions [*Vorstellungen*], constitutes the contents of the representation [*Darstellung*]. Then the subject is the significant for itself and the self-explanatory. [*Denn das Subject ist das Bedeutende für sich selbst und das sich selbst Erklärende.*]"⁵⁸ Hegel's end-of-art thesis has rarely been presented so succinctly. Bauer does more than faithfully present Hegel's aesthetics, however. In fact, he reverses the priority that Hegel had assigned to religion over art. For Bauer, the freely created, sensuous representations of the individual artist supersede the sensuous representations of the heteronomous religious consciousness. Yet if Bauer's *Hegel's Lehre von der Religion und Kunst* argues for the "*Auflösung*" of religion in art, the real point of the book is that the end of art marks the definitive end of religion.

As Douglas Moggach has argued, Bauer's reversal of Hegel's elevation of religion over art was already present in Bauer's 1829 prize essay on Kant's doctrine of the beautiful.⁵⁹ His enduring emphasis on art would seem to suggest a place for symbolism in Bauer's thought. The 1829 essay opens with an epigraph: "Symbol: 'The seriousness in art is its

⁵⁷ Bauer, *Die evangelische Landeskirche Preussens und die Wissenschaft* (Leipzig: Wigand, 1840), 59.

⁵⁸ Bauer, *Hegel's Lehre von der Religion und Kunst von dem Standpunkte des Glaubens aus beurtheilt* (Leipzig: Wigand, 1842), 198.

⁵⁹ Moggach, "Die Prinzipien des Schönen: Bruno Bauers Kritik an Kants Aesthetik," in Bauer, *Über die Prinzipien des Schönen. De pulchri principiis. Eine Preisschrift*, ed. Douglas Moggach and Winfried Schultze (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1996), 99.

joyfulness.’”⁶⁰ This invocation of joy seems to hover between Schiller’s play impulse and Nietzsche’s gay science, but in fact what is meant is that art is the “demonstrated and represented idea.”⁶¹ Art displays the unity of concept and object, thought and being, and thereby awakens “spiritual powers to their unhindered use,” as he wrote in an 1842 essay on Beethoven.⁶² Hence, when the very young Bauer claimed that “art is a symbol of philosophy,” he immediately added that “no one, not even the artist, because he remains in immediacy, can penetrate [*durchschauen*] art more deeply than the philosopher, and knowledge of art can be given only through philosophy.”⁶³

Feuerbach did not spell out the differences between himself and Bauer at the level of aesthetics. However, consideration of the Young Hegelian Hermann Hettner underscores the contrast I have drawn. Hettner’s 1845 article “Gegen die spekulative Aesthetik” employs Feuerbachian principles to criticise Hegel’s aesthetics. While Hettner defended the cognitive vocation of art, he insisted that art communicates truth differently than does conceptual reflection. As Ingrid Pepperle writes, for Hettner, the “aesthetic disclosure of truth [*Wahrheitsfindung*] is ‘aglow with the pulsing blood of concrete form,’ and it is not simply overtaken by formal thought, but is an ‘essential and necessary enlargement of systematic [*wissenschaftlichen*] thinking.’ The pleasure of art can never be replaced by abstract thought. It is pleasure of the whole human being, ‘which is both sensuous and spiritual.’”⁶⁴ Feuerbach was less explicit than Hettner about the aesthetic implications of his naturalism, but as we have seen, he reappropriated the Romantic emphasis on the opacity of the symbol, but defined that opacity not by reference to the divine but to human subjectivity’s embodied presence in the world. Bauer’s position, from 1829 onwards, rested on the assumption that the symbol is translatable

⁶⁰ It should be noted that here Bauer does not mean “symbol” in the sense of an artistic image but rather as a coherent doctrine of faith. This was an accepted German usage of the term, as exemplified in titles like Friedrich Creuzer’s *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker* (1810–12) or Johann Adam Möller’s *Symbolik. oder Darstellung der dogmatischen Gegensätze der Katholiken und Protestanten nach ihren öffentlichen Bekenntnissen* (1832). I take this point from George Williamson, *The Longing for Myth in Germany. Religion and Aesthetic Culture from Romanticism to Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

⁶¹ Bauer, *Über die Prinzipien des Schönen*, 69.

⁶² Bauer quoted in Moggach, “Die Prinzipien des Schönen,” 100. This passage may serve to illustrate Bauer’s tendency toward the “*Pragmatisierung*” of speculative theory, as Ingrid Pepperle writes in *Junghegelianische Geschichtsphilosophie und Kunsttheorie*, 141.

⁶³ Bauer, *Über die Prinzipien des Schönen*, 67.

⁶⁴ Pepperle, *Junghegelianische Geschichtsphilosophie und Kunsttheorie*, 148.

without remainder. In this conviction, Bauer was more typical of the Young Hegelians than was Feuerbach, as Peter Uwe Hohendahl's characterisation of Left Hegelian literary criticism would suggest: "In the final analysis it is the task of philosophical-critical argumentation to annihilate art as such and, by conceptualising art in its historical development, to carry its living remains into philosophical-conceptual discourse; hence, the minimal interest in hermeneutical problems. . . ." ⁶⁵

In *Theology and Social Theory*, the so-called post-secular philosopher John Milbank makes an observation about Spinoza's biblical criticism that is relevant to our discussion. Milbank notes that Spinoza's effort to create scientific criteria for biblical criticism was meant to free the reader; yet, writes Milbank, "although each free individual confronts the Biblical text without traditional mediation, this confrontation paradoxically *irones out* all idiosyncrasy, because the Bible, like nature, is [presumed to be] a self-interpreting totality, a world articulated by its own widest and most unambiguous meanings, as is nature by the most general motions." ⁶⁶ What must be banished from such readings, he insists, is allegory, the uncontrollable proliferation of Christocentric meaning. Milbank sees this "capturing of the Biblical text" as a constitutive dimension of modern politics, a commitment to "the illusion of spatial immediacy and to the exorcism of the metaphorically ambiguous." ⁶⁷ I emphatically do not want to align myself with Milbank's vilification of modern secularism or his lament for the decline of a theistic world. Nor am I particularly interested in defending the metaphorical richness of the biblical text against the tradition of secular reading that stretches from Spinoza through the Young Hegelians to our time. Rather, I am interested in the question of the secularisation of complexity and ambiguity, the history and the future prospects of this process. This question poses itself forcefully at a time when religion has surged into global politics and thinkers like John Milbank, and, more importantly, influential postmodernists like Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo are turning back to religion as a corrective to the putative weaknesses of secular thought. ⁶⁸ More precisely, I am

⁶⁵ Peter Uwe Hohendahl, "Literary Criticism in the Epoch of Liberalism, 1820–70," *A History of German Literary Criticism, 1730–1980*, ed. Peter Uwe Hohendahl (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), 245.

⁶⁶ John Milbank, *Theology & Social Theory. Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 18.

⁶⁷ Milbank, *Theology & Social Theory*, 20.

⁶⁸ See Derrida and Vattimo, eds., *Religion*, trans. Samuel Weber (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998). For detailed commentaries on Derrida's return to religion, see

concerned with the survival of complexity and ambiguity within the modernist emancipatory project, not just as obstacles that will be overcome but also as irreducible – and even enabling – conditions for the attempt to create humanist meaning.

The Young Hegelians' critique of religion presents something of a privileged moment for examining the hinge that connects the struggle for autonomy with the problem of meaning. It is not just that they confronted a deeply rooted system of religious heteronomy with the most radical claims for human self-sufficiency that had yet been uttered; rather, it is the fact that they confronted an age-old system of meaning with a philosophical guarantee of their own historical victory. That guarantee granted both the future and the past to an omnivorous self-consciousness that recognises itself behind every mask and sees every window as a mirror. Bauer took this much further than Feuerbach, as I have tried to suggest. Although Feuerbach also placed religion into the framework of a history of self-consciousness's self-actualisation, he reserved a place of tension between textual representation and the world, subject and object, clarity and obscurity, the visible and the invisible. Having said this, it is equally important to qualify it. This was, after all, just one impulse in his work, and it was generally subordinated to his desire for immediacy and the essential presence of the species. Yet in preserving a referential gap that leaves open the ambiguity of the symbol, Feuerbach embraced precisely the dimension of *positivity* that Bauer's philosophy of self-consciousness sought to "gobble up." If the Young Hegelians continue to have relevance for philosophical debate, I wager that it rests largely in the lessons to be drawn from the confrontation between the unprecedented assertion of self-consciousness and the positive remainder. The remainder, was, of course, the theme of Schelling's later "positive philosophy," and it helps to explain the interest Schelling has held for a tradition of postmodern thinkers from Heidegger through to Jean-Luc Nancy, Gianni Vattimo, and Slavoj Žižek. Insofar as Feuerbach's thought represents the incursion of this positivity into the heart of a philosophical discourse oriented towards the full self-possession of human spirit, it belongs to this contemporary debate, as does the clash among Young Hegelians over this issue.

the works of John Caputo and Hent de Vries. For a critical examination of one aspect of the broader revival of religion in postmodern and post-Marxist thought, see Warren Breckman, "Democracy Between Disenchantment and Political Theology. French Post-Marxism and the Return of Religion," *New German Critique*, 94 (Winter 2005); 72–105.

Ambiguity and positivity are of interest to more than the aesthetic theorist who recognises the need to preserve hermeneutical complexity in approaching the expressive object. I want to end by suggesting in an admittedly cursory way that the question is also of paramount concern to democratic political theory. To return to Marcel Gauchet's observation about the impulse to resurrect the transcendent within the disenchanted heart of the immanent, he raises an important point about the investments we make in transcendent collective bodies: This impulse, he writes, has given rise "to a new category of sacred beings, abstract individuals, collective apparitions, that we belong to and which crush us, immanent deities which, though never seen, continue to receive our devotion: the invisible State and the everlasting Nation. The personification and subjectification of transcendent entities is the key to modern political development whose most original contribution, namely the system of impersonal institutions, is incomprehensible if we do not take into account the formation of these entities, as effective as they are fictitious."⁶⁹ For over 200 years, the revolution unleashed by the struggle to replace personal power by impersonal institutions has intertwined and overlapped with the invention of quasi-transcendent entities like state, nation, and class. The historical and conceptual intersections of the democratic project with these new "immanent deities" compel us to recognise the unavoidable symbolic dimension of politics. Democracy demands preservation of non-identity between the symbolic and the real, renunciation of full possession, acknowledgement of the power of symbols, and recognition that the impossibility of fixed and univocal meaning opens the symbolic domain to the possibility of a constant activation of the quest for autonomy.

⁶⁹ Gauchet, *Disenchantment of the World*, p. 90.

Exclusiveness and Political Universalism in Bruno Bauer

Massimiliano Tomba

The entire course of post-Hegelian reflection can be defined as a many-faceted attempt to respond to the crisis provoked by the collapse of a society that had been divided into estates (*Stände*). The political reflection of the Hegelian school was confronted by the task of rethinking the relation between the individual and the state, on the one hand and, on the other, of finding a new organisational principle capable of holding together the mass of atoms liberated by the dissolution of the old estate order. In this framework there emerged philosophies of history that attempted to construct a principle of social organisation by looking ahead to the future, anticipating a new synthesis of the individual with the political whole.¹

What distinguishes the reflections of Bruno Bauer is the extreme radicalism and consistency with which he confronted the crisis, almost identifying himself with the forces that had provoked it. It is with Bauer that the crisis becomes an epochal event: not only a crisis of political concepts, but also of theology and of metaphysics. In a series of lengthy historical studies, Bauer tries to reconstruct the genesis of the crisis, delineating a movement of long duration, at whose origin lies the concentration of powers in the modern absolutist state; but also a crisis of brief duration, due to a rapid historical acceleration in the wake of the French Revolution. According to Bauer, it was precisely the absolute monarchy that had prepared the terrain for the republic through a levelling of the *Stände*.

¹ On these aspects of post-Hegelian reflection, see Massimiliano Tomba, "Filosofia della crisi. La riflessione post-hegeliana," in *Filosofia politica*, no. 2/2002, 193–222.

Translated from Italian by Douglas Moggach.

Anticipating the well-known thesis of Tocqueville, Bauer thus stressed the elements of continuity between the *Ancien Régime* and *Révolution*.

At the beginning of the 1840s, the period I will consider here, Bauer worked on the construction and dissolution of his own version of a political theology. In Bauer's writings from 1841 to 1844, we find changes of perspective, even very profound ones, but these are always linked to an effort to comprehend and intervene in the crisis. What is central in many respects is determining the meaning of exclusiveness (*Ausschließlichkeit*), which Bauer sees as the basis of both religion and politics. The origin of the Christian religion, understood politically as the constitutive act of the community of Christians, presupposes for Bauer the exclusion of non-Christians. In this political reading of the genesis of Christianity, Bauer interprets its constitutive categories as polemical categories. Bauer discovers an identical logic at the heart of the political form that can constitute itself as a unity, whether that of a people or of a nation, only by excluding others. Convinced that theological criticism must be completed in political criticism, Bauer works towards the erosion of exclusiveness both in religion and in the form of the state.

It is the extreme consistency of Bauer's thought that makes it interesting – even, in a sense, current. It is not, however, a matter of turning Bruno Bauer into our contemporary; it is rather a question of how Bauer confronts the crisis in modern political conceptuality, of the radicalism with which he presses the crisis to its final consequences, even anticipating some of its twentieth-century outcomes. Today, when the crisis of sovereignty and of the modern nation-state is widely accepted as a fact, it may be useful to revert to the origins of this crisis, and to the reflections of a generation that confronted it in the *Vormärz*.

In the present text, I propose to trace the way in which the philosophy of history, of Hegelian derivation, becomes with Bauer an agonistic conception of history, whose results are guaranteed by no historical law, but only by conflict. I intend, besides, to bring out the specific Bauerian conceptions of universalism and freedom.

I. CRITIQUE AS THE PRACTICE OF CRISIS

In Bruno Bauer, crisis and critique are indissociable moments of a single reflection.² If it is true, as has often been observed, that Bauer's epochal

² On the relation between crisis and critique, including an etymological connection, see Reinhart Koselleck, *Kritik und Krise. Ein Beitrag zur Pathogenese der bürgerlichen Welt* (Freiburg-München: Karl Alber, 1959).

reflection is intertwined with autobiographical elements,³ I think that this combination can be seen as an attempt by Bauer to locate his own position in respect to the crisis: the identification of a better strategy to understand the crisis without being dragged along in the general ruin. Bauer's position is that of one who does not want to be swept away by the forces that are leading the world to its ruin but who decides to take part in the crisis, to work with it towards the dissolution of everything that continues to exist in thought. It is insufficient merely to ascertain the crisis of the state and of Christianity; it is necessary to raise this crisis to the self-consciousness of the age. When Bauer writes to Marx that theory is "the strongest praxis,"⁴ this affirmation should be read in conjunction with a letter written only four days earlier: "the terrorism of true theory must clear the field."⁵ The epochal function of critique, its grafting onto the crisis, consists in destroying the categories through which the existing thinks itself. Criticism clears the field of everything that, *in thought*, upholds a world already in crisis; the action of criticism is to show the theoretical groundlessness of the categories in which the existing order is conceived. Only in this sense can Bauer affirm that theory is "the strongest praxis."

Bauer's radicalism is the elaboration of the crisis through criticism. "Critique is the crisis,"⁶ writes Bauer in 1842. The crisis cannot be understood except through the practice of criticism – that is, through the production of the crisis itself. This means that the crisis is not simply an object to be understood; it does not stand over and against the subject of critique as something irreducibly other, but is the very product of critique, and only thus is it comprehensible. Critique is the practice of crisis in theory, just as the crisis is the product of critique. Bauer does not intend to change the world through critique,⁷ nor even to offer a prefiguring of what should come in its place. Critique is the *active comprehension* of the

³ This is the tendency of the work of Ernst Barnikol. See especially *Bruno Bauer. Studien und Materialien*, aus dem Nachlass ausgewählt und zusammengestellt von P. Reimer und H.-M. Sass (Assen: van Gorcum, 1972); and *Das entdeckte Christentum im Vormärz. Bruno Bauers Kampf gegen Religion und Christentum und Erstausgabe seiner Kampfschrift* (Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1989).

⁴ Bauer to Marx 31.3.1841, in K. Marx/F. Engels, *Gesamtausgabe*, hrsg. von Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1975 f. [MEGA]), Bd. III, 1, p. 355.

⁵ Bauer to Marx 28.3.1841, in MEGA, Bd. III, 1, p. 353.

⁶ Bruno Bauer, *Die gute Sache der Freiheit und meine eigene Angelegenheit* (Zürich und Winterthur: Verlag des literarischen Comptoirs, 1842; reprint Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1972), 204.

⁷ K. Röttgers, *Kritik und Praxis. Zur Geschichte des Kritikbegriffs von Kant bis Marx* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975), 215, however, maintains this, speaking of the "absurdity of Bauer's theory."

crisis; it has in the crisis the condition of its own possibility; and in the very act of comprehending, it produces the crisis, elevating it into the categories of the self-representation of the age.

In “Der christliche Staat und unsere Zeit,” we find the first political application of this Bauerian problematic. Here Bauer writes that the “historical categories become phrases, catchwords, slogans of the particular parties only when the thing they designate has been over and done with for a long time.”⁸ It is not only the concept of the Christian state employed by F. J. Stahl that Bauer puts under accusation, but there is another slogan whose unreality Bauer denounces: the effort to maintain the estate order (*ständisches Wesen*), to seek a synthesis between sovereignty and the estate principle. Bauer replies that with the affirmation of the absolute state, the estates (*Stände*) “were crushed, and, with the theory of territoriality, the ecclesiastic power was elevated to an indissociable attribute of sovereignty.”⁹ Bauer takes up the ending of the estate order to show how the slogans of the conservative party refer to a situation long since past. Conservative thought, which had opposed the extension of the suffrage in the name of an organic articulation of the estates, shows itself to be a phenomenon of, and a reaction to, the overcoming of the modern dualism of society and state, as undertaken from the side of the *societas civilis sive status*.¹⁰ Conservative thought could not but harbour already exhausted historical categories, even if these, now evoked as slogans, assumed a *new* polemical force, thus becoming an integral part of the new political conceptuality against which they were directed.

Post-Hegelian reflection identifies as the specific element of the crisis the end of the estate order, and the pulverisation of the *societas civilis* into a multiplicity of individual atoms. The political mediations intervening between the individual and the state are eliminated, and distinctions among the estates are assimilated into a single universal difference, that between the individual and the state. Bauer grasps the dissolution

⁸ Bruno Bauer, “Der christliche Staat und unsere Zeit,” in *Hallische Jahrbücher für deutsche Wissenschaft und Kunst*, 7–12 June 1841, nos. 135–40, pp. 537–58, in *Feldzüge der reinen Kritik*, ed. H.-M. Sass (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1968), 7. See Douglas Moggach, *The Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), ch. 4.

⁹ Bauer, “Der christliche Staat,” 20–1.

¹⁰ Cf. P. Kondylis, *Konservatismus. Geschichtlicher Gehalt und Untergang* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1986), 26–9; Kondylis writes that “the greatest time of the estates falls in the pre-state period, and ends with the consolidation of the absolutist state.” Bauer, “Der christliche Staat,” 118. [In German in the original – D.M.]

of estate linkages as an element in the modern crisis that destroys the image of a state organism, replacing it with an atomistic multitude. If the dissolution of the estate structures has produced an atomistic individualism, Bauer – and this is his radicalism – intends to think through to the end this atomic principle, without yielding to the temptation to seek any kind of synthesis in the future or, worse, to turn back nostalgically to the past.

The task of criticism is to fill the gap that had opened between the age and its representations: The usual categories have no more hold on the present, and are directly superseded by this reality. The dissolution of the estates and the revolutions that had signalled the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century show that the old privileges had lost all legitimacy, that history is now rent by a new conflict between universal emancipation and privilege. In the *Vormärz*, Bauer thinks he can work towards the development of emancipation by displaying through critique the forces that had brought on the crisis.¹¹ This is a theme that will accompany Bauer's reflections at least until the end of the Revolutions of 1848, in which he discerns the struggle between the efforts of the government to "restore the estate distinctions" and "universal liberation."¹² According to Bauer, these are the forces meeting on the battlefield of history; the crisis may result either in *progress*, if the estates are destroyed and general emancipation is realised; or else in *regression*, if the force of the governments is sufficient to restore the estates. There is always a possibility that there might emerge "a situation in which the estates, differences of birth and privilege, are restored by violence."¹³ Historical regressions are therefore possible, but they require violence, because the representatives of privilege must confront the consciousness of freedom. Bauer delineates a polemical conception of history in which only violence applied by the warring parties determines the result of the conflict.

Critique presents no solutions to the crisis; these must only await history: "Criticism is the only power to illuminate the self-deception of

¹¹ On the connection between emancipation and crisis in Bauer, see P. Post, *Emanzipation und Krise. Studien zur Idee der Emanzipation bei Bruno Bauer, Ludwig Feuerbach, Moses Heß*, Bonn, Habil. Schrift (1975).

¹² Bruno Bauer, "Verteidigungsrede B. Bauers vor den Wahlmännern des vierten Wahlbezirkes am 22.2.1849," in E. Barnikol, *Bruno Bauer. Studien und Materialien*, 518–25.

¹³ Cf. Bruno Bauer, "Die christliche Glaubenslehre in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung und im Kampf mit der modernen Wissenschaft. Dargestellt von Dr. D.F. Strauß, Band 1 u. 2, 1840–1841," in *Deutsche Jahrbücher für Wissenschaft und Kunst*, no. 22, p. 85.

the existent, and places itself above it; history will take care of the crisis and its result.”¹⁴ The task of critique is to show the inapplicability of the entire perspective of the estates, ending in their self-dissolution. Against this “nihilistic” *hybris*, Arnold Ruge will express his criticisms and incomprehension, seeing in the discourse of the Berlin “Freien” only theoretical and practical extravagances that claim to dissolve the state and religion conceptually, but without knowing what to put in their place.¹⁵ But Bauer was entirely aware of this, and even asserted the negative character of his own criticism; this was not a limitation of *Kritik*, but showed the impossibility of producing any positive result that was not merely the old world disguised as the new: “I am also of the opinion” – writes Bauer – “that one must not expect of critique to provide the new. This task history will accomplish. A single individual may certainly criticise a particular constitution, but cannot construct it *a priori*.”¹⁶ Bruno Bauer recognises clearly that, in order not simply to reproduce the Old in a new garb, one must renounce the illusion of wanting positively to determine the New,¹⁷ which can neither be anticipated nor made the object of discourse: All discourse necessarily employs existing categories, and can thus reproduce only in thought the old world.¹⁸

The task of criticism is rather to illuminate the conflicts at work in history, to pass through them in order to radicalise them, to undermine all compromising hypotheses: “We must make our way through the mire to reach the heights that command the battlefield of the present and the immediate future.”¹⁹ *Kritik* enters into the struggles of history to

¹⁴ Bauer, *Die gute Sache*, 225.

¹⁵ A. Ruge to M. Fleischer (12 December 1842): “The ‘Freien’ are a frivolous and blasé clique. . . . B. Bauer wanted to defend all their theoretical and practical extravagances, which are definitely just as arbitrary as romanticism itself. He foisted the most ridiculous ideas on me: that the state and religion must be dissolved in *their concepts*, property and the family too; he said that we cannot know what is to be done positively; all we know is that everything is to be negated . . .,” in H. and I. Pepperle, eds., *Die Hegelsche Linke. Dokumente zu Philosophie und Politik im deutschen Vormärz* (Frankfurt am Main: Röderberg, 1986), 859. [In German in the original – D.M.]

¹⁶ Bauer to Ruge, 27 October 1842, Manuscript, Dresden h 46, I Nr. 25, cited from Hans-Martin Sass, *Untersuchungen zur Religionsphilosophie in der Hegelschule 1830–1850*, Diss. Münster. (1963), 259–60.

¹⁷ Cf. Bruno Bauer, “Hinrichs politische Vorlesungen,” in *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, 1844, Heft 5, p. 23.

¹⁸ There are some analogies here to the thinking of the Frankfurt School: A. K. Jetli, *The Role of the Critic and Logic of Criticism in Hegel, Bruno Bauer, and the Frankfurter School*, The American University, Diss. Philosophy (1981).

¹⁹ Bruno Bauer, *Geschichte der Politik, Kultur und Aufklärung des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Erster Band (Charlottenburg: Egbert Bauer, 1843; reprint Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1965), XIII.

dissolve the categories that perpetuate the existent in thought. Bauer's critique of religion and politics constitutes the strategy through which self-consciousness takes part in history in the very act of comprehending it. Only in this sense is critique itself a historical power.

II. THE PRINCIPLE OF EXCLUSIVENESS

From the beginning, Bauer's research was oriented towards the points of convergence between theological and political categories. This programme of research is already traced out in *Kritik der evangelischen Geschichte der Synoptiker*, of 1841. Bauer wants to show the particular dialectic that traverses Christianity: It claims to be the bearer of principles of equality and freedom, but these turn into their opposites, so that the idea of universal equality becomes, in the concept of grace, exclusion and arbitrary election. The contraposition of grace and liberty is for Bauer only one of the dualisms intrinsic to Christianity, besides that of man and god, and of spirit and flesh.²⁰ Bauer thinks all these oppositions politically, or at least examines them within the logical structure of the political form as well, when he transposes these structures into the political sphere, delineating the opposition between grace and the general will.²¹ In his political writings in the *Rheinische Zeitung*, of 1842, Bauer underlines the close connection between arbitrary power and the theological concept of grace; but precisely this relation opens onto another, in his eyes still more significant. A power is arbitrary to the extent that it chooses, by sovereign decision, whether or not to grant rights, to whom to grant them, and thus *whom to exclude*. Arbitrary decision and exclusiveness are for Bauer determinations common to the concept of grace and to despotic power. The relation between grace and predestination implies necessarily, in Bauer's view, exclusiveness: Grace is not grace if it is for everyone.²² Christianity, which presents itself as the religion of universal love, offering to all the

²⁰ Cf. Bruno Bauer, *Das entdeckte Christentum. Eine Erinnerung an das achtzehnte Jahrhundert und ein Beitrag zur Krisis des neunzehnten* (Zürich und Winterthur: Verlag des literarischen Comptoirs, 1843; reprinted in Ernst Barnikol, *Das entdeckte Christentum im Vormärz. Bruno Bauers Kampf gegen Religion und Christentum und Erstausgabe seiner Kampfschrift* [1927], Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1989), 244.

²¹ Cf. Bruno Bauer, "Deutschlands Beruf in der Gegenwart und Zukunft," in *Rheinische Zeitung*, Beiblatt, no. 158, 7 June 1842; the opposition of universal rights and rights through grace is explained in Bauer, "Louis Philipp und die Julirevolution," in *Rheinische Zeitung*, Beiblatt, no. 170, 19 June 1842.

²² Cf. Bauer, "Deutschlands Beruf."

gift of faith, is according to Bauer also the religion of universal hatred, because it would exclude all that contradicts faith.²³

The critique of theology developed in the *Vormärz* initiates a process of radicalisation whose result is the mutual mirroring of political and theological categories: As in a lightning-flash, Bauer illuminates the political content of theological categories, and the theological content of political categories. The investigation of Christianity, pressed to extract its polemical essence, manifests the political character of theological oppositions: When Ludwig Feuerbach cites Bernard of Clairvaux – “the Christian glories in the death of the pagan, because this renders glory to Christ”²⁴ – he is in agreement with Bauer on at least one point: Christianity, developing the polemical oppositions to an extreme, cannot allow non-Christians to exist alongside it. Bauer writes that Christianity “does not relate to the whole man, but to man as believer, and as such to man who can or should (*soll*), or who must necessarily (*muß*) become a believer if he does not want to be damned.”²⁵ The extreme acts of the religious wars did not merely evidence misunderstandings of the sacred scriptures, but revealed the very essence of the Christian religion, its constitutive logic. For Feuerbach it was Christianity that produced the radicalisation of the polemical opposition between friend and enemy: “Who is not *with* Christ is *against* Christ. *With me* or *against me*. Faith knows only *enemies* or *friends*, not impartiality. . . . Faith is essentially *intolerant*.”²⁶ Both Feuerbach and, in even greater measure, Bauer want to show that the extreme acts of intolerance of which religion proved capable are inscribed in its very concept. For Bauer, Christian cruelty and acts of extermination are not aberrations due to false interpretations of the sacred texts but determinations of which religion constitutes the condition of possibility. This results from the fact that Christianity resolves the concept of man into faith, so that every religious party believes that it represents the true human essence, denying the other as inhuman.²⁷ The Christian formula “who is not with me is against me” (Mt. 12, 30) shows, according to Bauer,

²³ Cf. Bauer, *Die Judenfrage* (Braunschweig: Friedrich Otto, 1843), 17.

²⁴ Bernard of Clairvaux, *De laude novae militiae ad Milites Templi*: “In morte pagani Christianus gloriatur, quia Christus glorificatur,” cited from Ludwig Feuerbach, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (1841), in *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. W. Schuffenhauer (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1981), Bd. 5., 424.

²⁵ Bauer, *Die Judenfrage*, 17.

²⁶ Feuerbach, *Wesen des Christentums*, 422.

²⁷ Cf. Bauer, *Das entdeckte Christentum*, 195.

precisely the exclusive character of Christianity,²⁸ whose universal love becomes hatred of other peoples, dividing humanity into the baptised and the non-baptised, men and non-men.

Bauer allows the polemical design of the gospel narratives to emerge by immersing them in the flux of their origins; he explains the contradictions among particular passages from the specific formal requirements of the context in which they are found. The evangelists, as proto-founders of the Christian community, were seeking contrasts. Thus, when it is affirmed, "Love thine enemies" (Mt. 5, 44), the meaning of this sentence must be sought, according to Bauer, in the pragmatism of Matthew, who casts a polemical glance back at the Old Testament.²⁹ The question of *Feindesliebe* is important: What is asked is love for one's enemies, and not hatred, as enjoined by the Old Testament. Bauer understands this sentence not as an expression of universal love but as the impossible overcoming of the principle of exclusion, which, however, gives life and strength to the Christian community. It has meaning only when inserted into its context: Here the formal-historical method inaugurated by Bauer bears its finest fruits.³⁰ The gospel precept "Love thine enemies," in its precise context, serves as a complement to what immediately precedes it: "You have heard it said, 'Love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy'" (Mt. 5, 43). The point is that the clause "Hate thine enemy" finds no basis in the Old Testament; it is an invention functional to the construction of a polemical parallelism between the Old and New Testaments. The clause is a product of subsequent reflection, not of Jesus, but of the literary pragmatism of the person whom the Church names Matthew. He, having Luke's gospel before him, would have found there the commandment of love for one's enemies (Luke 6, 27): What was lacking was the construction of this precept in contraposition to the Old Testament. The form of Christian love for enemies is only polemical: Christian love posits itself as more universal than Judaic love because it does not limit

²⁸ Cf. Bauer, *Die Judenfrage*, 53.

²⁹ Cf. Bauer, *Kritik der evangelischen Geschichte der Synoptiker*, 2 Bde (Leipzig: Wigand, 1841), 348–51.

³⁰ This *Formuntersuchung*, a term that recurs already in Bauer, will become well known in the works of Martin Dibelius and Rudolf Bultmann in the twentieth-century science of the New Testament: cf. J. von Kempski, "Über Bruno Bauer. Eine Studie zum Ausgang des Hegelianismus," in *Brechungen. Kritische Versuche zur Philosophie der Gegenwart*. Schriften 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992), 165; see also G. Runze, *Bruno Bauer. Der Meister der theologischen Kritik* (Berlin: Hermann Paetel Verlag, 1931), 9.

itself to love for one's neighbour but includes even one's enemy. Bauer shows, however, the literary artifice of this formal construction: Christian love is universal only in contrast to the Jewish religion, as the invention of the Old Testament precept to hate one's enemies demonstrates. The affirmation of Christian love for one's enemies is therefore a polemical affirmation that constructs a parallel and a contrast with the Mosaic law.

Bauer writes, "Every determinateness must necessarily hate the other and cannot indeed subsist without it."³¹ This is the principle of exclusiveness that Bauer wants to bring to light in politics, tracing its emergence from religion. For any determinate particularity to be valid as a juridical form, it is necessary that *some other* be excluded and reduced to otherness, against which one can assert one's own identity. Bauer wants to show the principle of exclusiveness as an originary act from which a determinate form takes shape: This is the logic that traverses both religion and politics.

The questions examined by Bauer in the gospel histories were already intrinsically political, because, having identified exclusiveness as the linchpin of the Christian community's identity, Bauer discovers the same logic at work within the Church and the state. For this reason, critique cannot remain confined to the terrain of religion, but, seizing the nexus between theology and politics, it must advance towards the categories of the state. Writing to Feuerbach to propose a collaboration in the *Rheinische Zeitung*, Bauer underlined the urgency of carrying the critique of religion into politics and invited him to continue to *écraser l'infâme*, adding, though, that "*l'infâme* is immortal if it is not crushed in politics and in juridical right."³² The principle of exclusion can be suppressed only if, together with the Christian concept of grace, the exclusive character of the Christian state is also subjected to criticism.

In the identical juridical organisation of church and state, Bauer points out the same exclusive logic at work in the necessity of determining non-Christians and noncitizens. The logical nexus between the form of the church and the form of the state is at the centre of Bauer's interest: This is the axis of his political theology. Demonstrating the polemical oppositions that the Christian religion would take to an extreme in the couplet human-inhuman, Bauer writes that "Religion constitutes the essence of

³¹ Bauer, *Das entdeckte Christentum*, 197.

³² B. Bauer to L. Feuerbach, 10.3.1842, in Feuerbach, *Briefwechsel II* (1849–1844), in *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 18, 171. On the unity of politics and religion in Bauer, see K. Comoth, "Zur Negation des 'religiösen Bewußtseins' in der Kritik Bruno Bauers," in *Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie*, Bd. 17 (1975), 221.

the state”³³; not, however, of a particular state, but of the state as such, in that it, like religion, is permeated by the principle of exclusiveness.

Bauer’s text *Das entdeckte Christentum*, which was banned and destroyed, depicts the essence of the state by recovering in its logical structure the same *exclusive* nature as that evidenced in religion. It is at the intersection of theology and politics that Bauer intends to put criticism to work; after demonstrating the exclusive nature of religion, Bauer finds the same logic in the state, and he designates this categorial juncture “*the Christian state*.” Bauer speaks therefore of the *Christian state* in the sense of a state that has religion as its own essence and basis.³⁴ By doing so, Bauer develops the concept of the Christian state in an original form; it is not by chance that his most famous critic, Karl Marx, praises the Bauerian critique of the Christian state, whose essence Bauer explains “with boldness, acuity, wit, profundity, and in a style at once precise, robust, and energetic.”³⁵ Bauer himself seems convinced that this is his most important achievement; to his critics, he objects that to criticise him, they would have had to refute his proof that the Christian state, “given that its vital principle is a determinate religion, cannot concede to the followers of another determinate religion . . . a complete equality with its own estates.”³⁶

We can thus understand why precisely the Jewish Question would be an especially important object of investigation for Bauer, because here the problem of emancipation involved the cross-cutting of theological and political categories. I do not propose to consider in this place what the *Judenfrage* asserts on the subject of the Jews³⁷; I want rather to underline

³³ Bauer, *Das entdeckte Christentum*, 217.

³⁴ Cf. Bauer, *Die Judenfrage*, 55.

³⁵ K. Marx, *Zur Judenfrage* (1844), in *MEGA*, Bd. I/2, p. 142. Stuke comments that this is “praise that should not be forgotten when we consider Marx’s critique of Bauer.” H. Stuke, *Philosophie der Tat. Studien zur “Verwirklichung der Philosophie” bei den Junghegelianern und den Wahren Sozialisten* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1963), 166 [in German in the original – D.M.J. Köppen, in a letter to Marx dated 3 June 1841, writes that some of the ideas in this work of Bauer’s seem at home in the Schützenstraße – that is, in Marx’s most recent dwelling in Berlin, meaning that they seem to be inspired by Marx himself. Cf. *MEGA*, Bd. III/1, 360–3.

³⁶ Bruno Bauer, “Neueste Schriften über die Judenfrage,” in *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, Heft 1, Dec. 1843, 8; the polemic is with the rabbi Samuel Hirsch, author of *Das Judenthum, der christliche Staat und die moderne Kritik. Briefe zur Beleuchtung der Judenfrage von Bruno Bauer* (Leipzig: Heinrich Hunger, 1843). On the Christian state, see 98–103.

³⁷ I refer here to my book *Crisi e critica in Bruno Bauer. Il principio di esclusione come fondamento del politico* (Naples: Bibliopolis, 2002), 137 ff. Recently David Leopold, “The Hegelian Anti-Semitism of Bruno Bauer,” in *History of European Ideas*, no. 25, 179–206, Leopold has raised the question of anti-Semitism in Bruno Bauer. See also Douglas Moggach, “Republican Rigorism and Emancipation in Bruno Bauer,” in this volume.

what emerges here in relation to the question of exclusion and emancipation. Bauer's discourse concerns the political theology of the state, whose vital principle is Christianity as a logical structure characterised by the conceptual couplet identity-exclusion. For Bauer *exclusion* is not, as his critic Salomon thinks in 1843, the result of a misunderstanding of Christianity, which is in reality the religion of love,³⁸ but is rather intrinsic to its nature, and so to the nature of the Christian state. According to Bauer, emancipation requires the suppression of the conditions of possibility of exclusion. This is the centre of gravity around which the *Judenfrage* revolves.

Bauer's critique of exclusivity is articulated at two levels: On the one hand he recognises in exclusiveness the constitutive principle of the determinate political and religious order; on the other hand he reveals its arbitrary and accidental character. The state presupposes exclusion, with the result that the pretended universality of rights comes to be founded on the wrong done to the excluded. Bauer does not mean only to make this decision less arbitrary but rather wants to suppress all principles of exclusion. Nor can the question of exclusion be resolved by a plea for tolerance, because this still implies a moment of arbitrary will. The concept of tolerance refers to an absolute and tyrannical power: "Tolerance, affirms a great man of the past century, is not the word that expresses freedom of religion, but is instead, in its exact signification, an offensive and tyrannical word, since any power having the right to tolerate, precisely by the fact that it tolerates, is also able not to tolerate, and to violate the liberty of thought and confession."³⁹ The great man cited by Bauer is Mirabeau,⁴⁰ who was among the authors of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* of 1789.

At the centre of the *Judenfrage* is therefore the dogma of the principle of exclusion⁴¹ that Bauer investigates in the political theology of the

³⁸ G. Salomon, *Bruno Bauer und seine gehaltlose Kritik über die Judenfrage* (Hamburg: Perthes-Besser und Mauke, 1843), 69.

³⁹ Bruno Bauer, "Kirche und Staats-Gouvernement," in *Rheinische Zeitung*, Beiblatt, no. 88, 29 March 1842.

⁴⁰ Mirabeau, in discussions preparatory to the Declaration, maintained that "the existence of an authority with the power to tolerate is an affront to the liberty of thought, by the very fact that the power that tolerates may also not tolerate." In *Le Courier de Provence*, Mirabeau commented on the amendment proposed by the bishop of Lydda to article 10 of the Declaration of 1789, which limited religious freedom ("as long as their performance does not disturb the public order established by law"); he wrote that "In this way the government could prevent the public religious observances of non-Catholics."

⁴¹ Cf. Ernst Jungnitz, "Das Judentum und die Kritik," in *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, Heft 9 (August 1844), 11.

modern state, because “political and religious prejudice are inseparably one and the same.”⁴² When Bauer examines the Christian state and the question of the emancipation of the Jews – two interconnected matters – the importance of his reflections consists in having displaced the terms of the problem. It is not the exclusion of the Jews as Jews, and thus not their particular emancipation that constitutes the essence of the question. Bauer shifts the entire question onto the logical necessity, for the state, of determining its own identity by an act of exclusion. Along these coordinates the Bauerian criticism of exclusivity rapidly becomes a critique of the state. Political theology reveals an element of exclusion that no universalism of rights in the modern state can overcome: If the principle of exclusion constitutes the very essence of the political, as it appears to do in Bauer’s discourse, then any overcoming of it cannot occur without the critique of right and of the state.

III. FREEDOM IN AN AGONISTIC CONCEPTION OF HISTORY

The Bauerian idea of the universal produces a complication in his conception of human rights; according to Bauer, the concept of *Menschenrechte* “was only discovered by the Christian world during the last century,” and this idea “is not innate to man, but is rather achieved in struggle against historical traditions.”⁴³ Bauer wants to put under accusation those conceptions that consider human rights as something innate or prescribed by nature,⁴⁴ including even the Declaration of 1789, which transforms these rights into *droits naturels et imprescriptibles de l’homme*. In the transformation of historically acquired rights into natural rights, there occurs a singular superimposition of nature onto history. Certainly the transformation of human rights into an absolute value, meta-historical and inscribed in human nature, was a useful expedient to shelter these rights from the possible threats of those in power. But thus there also occurs a politicisation of nature, its transformation into a political category. Bauer follows this dialectic of human rights, reading it against the background of a polemical conception of the universal: “The rights of man are therefore not a gift of nature”; they are not simply the bequest of previous history, but they are “the prize of the combat against the accidents of birth and against the privileges that history up to now has transmitted

⁴² Bauer, *Die Judenfrage*, 96.

⁴³ Bauer, *Die Judenfrage*, 19.

⁴⁴ Cf. Bauer, *Die Judenfrage*, 19.

as a legacy from generation to generation.”⁴⁵ No historical law guarantees the universality of rights because they are, according to Bauer, only the result of a struggle between the excluded and the holders of power. Bauer’s objective is to mark out the caesura between the sphere of right and nature, because the modern concept of right is precisely the negation of privileges linked to nature and to birth. So, for Bauer, every appeal to nature in relation to human rights must sound equivocal and misleading.

Separating man from nature, making him a historical product, means for Bauer making man a product of his own struggles, of his own emancipation and of his battles against tradition: “Man is a product of history, not of nature, he is the product of himself and of his own actions, and modern revolutions were necessary for human rights to prevail against natural instincts and the natural determinations that had governed and directed men in the life of the estates; through these same revolutions, man finally returns to himself and becomes man.”⁴⁶ Thus, as occurs in the critique of religion, Bruno Bauer intends to show that no creations of spirit may have an absolute value or an eternal duration. Human rights, issuing from the struggle against all privileges of birth, remain prisoners of the principle they had combated, and thus, at the moment of its conquest, liberty, together with property, security, and resistance to oppression, becomes one of the *droits naturels et imprescriptibles de l’homme*. For Bauer, instead, man is born neither free nor equal but becomes so in struggle with privileges and traditions; only in the struggles affirming liberty and equality is the modern concept of man produced. These are the coordinates between which Bauer constructs his own notion of universalism. In the act of affirming certain innate and natural rights, declarations like those of Virginia in 1776, or of France in 1789, attempted to render eternal the result of a historical conquest. Bauerian criticism shows instead, in this naturalisation and perpetuation of rights, a theological kernel that must be extracted. To de-theologise the content of the *Déclaration* means not only to historicise its concepts but also to show how every single concept must be understood within a field of forces, the analysis of which is the specific object of Bauer’s research. Even reason, as reason common to all men, to all countries and epochs, the basis of the universalism of the *Déclaration*,⁴⁷ turns out, therefore, under the scrutiny

⁴⁵ Bauer, *Die Judenfrage*, 19.

⁴⁶ Bauer, “*Die christliche Glaubenslehre*,” 84.

⁴⁷ Cf. E. Brauns, “*Les Déclarations des droits de l’homme et du citoyen sont-elles des textes philosophiques?*,” in *La Révolution française et la Philosophie. Echanges et conflits* (Poitiers: CRDP de Poitiers, 1990), 62.

of Bauer's critique, to be something abstract. Reason itself is indeed a historical conquest, the prize of a combat, just as rights and freedom are. The Enlightenment consequence, according to which individuals possess rights as human beings, and not as a result of aristocratic birth or traditional determinate privileges, is accepted by Bauer only in its *pars destruens*. Bauer is critical of every form of privilege, whether linked to membership in an estate or a religion, or linked to the accident of birth in a particular nation or caste.

For Bauer the Declaration of Rights is without doubt an epochal event, the outcome of that atheistic Enlightenment that he himself re-enacts, but its horizon was still abstract: An element of religiosity, revealing itself in an appeal to the eternity of rights, still infects the *Déclaration*. Combining the universality of rights with the question of emancipation, Bauer attempts to transcend the contradictory horizon of the Declaration. In this document, the concept of citizen (*Staatsbürger*) shows itself to be an antithetical concept; it is marked by the contradiction between the *Bürger* and the *Staat*, which stands as the moment of coercion and the external limit upon the liberty of the former. Article Ten of the French Declaration of 1789 states: "No one should be troubled on account of his opinions, including religious ones, as long as their display does not disturb the public order established by law."⁴⁸ Not only do the freedoms of religion and of opinion encounter a limit in the law, which with sovereign authority determines the sphere where they may operate, but these freedoms themselves exist only on the strength of the law. The Declaration speaks not of the liberty of man, but of the citizen, implying thus the complete subsumption of the concept of man in that of the citizen. Man, newly liberated from the chains of the estates, is forced back into the condition of citizen, whose liberty is determined by law. In the expression *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*, it is no longer clear whether the two terms designate two distinct realities, or whether they form instead a dyad in which the first term is always already contained in the second. The concept of man seems therefore radically subsumed in that of citizen, in that he can possess human rights only through the guarantee of a public power that can impose their respect. One can thus have human rights only by being a *citizen* of a state: In this sense *l'homme* of the *Déclaration* is fully absorbed in the *citoyen*. Following this argumentative pattern, it emerges that only membership in a political community, in a state,

⁴⁸ *Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen* du 26 août 1789, in Maurice Duverger, *Constitutions et Documents politiques* (Paris: PUF, 1957), 118.

defines the essence of man and his rights. The logic of universal rights thus seems to be permeated by a fundamental contradiction: Universal rights would have validity uniquely for the citizens of a state, implicitly presupposing in this way the exclusion of all who are not citizens, that is, precisely of those who have greatest need of these universal rights. But there is a further problem, which Bauer begins to observe: If the validity of human rights is guaranteed by anchoring them in citizenship, the exclusive nature of the latter entangles human rights in a contradiction, in that they have a universalistic vocation, but a privileged reality. Bauer tests human rights by attempting to think consistently the idea of universality, which the eighteenth century had not succeeded in developing completely.

Radicalising the dualism between man and nature, Bauer comes to consider even the concepts of “reason” and of “man” as historical acquisitions: Reason is for Bauer the force that creates itself as infinite self-consciousness,⁴⁹ instituting the universal level on which the liberty of every thinking being is possible. Precisely because “thought is the true generic process,”⁵⁰ the species defines itself for Bauer not on a natural basis, but as the universal process of thought. This displacement has a specific political and philosophical significance: The motor of emancipation and so, for Bauer, of history, is thought and its universality, and not natural impulses, be these good or bad. The rupture that Bauer effects between the human sphere and nature now demarcates the scope of history, taking as its starting point the human specificity of thought, and thus rejecting all discourse about human nature. In this way Bauer intends to circumvent the question of the state of nature; the Hobbesian principle of *homo homini lupus* and equally the antithetical one of *homo homini Deus*, employed by Ludwig Feuerbach, present themselves in the light of the Bauerian concept of liberty as purely abstract. Developing the rift between nature and the specifically human sphere of liberty, Bauer seeks to liquidate both these formulas.

Leading the *Gattung* back to its origins in thought, Bauer intends to block any definition of the species in naturalistic terms; man for Bauer is

⁴⁹ Cf. Bruno Bauer, *Hegel's Lehre von der Religion und Kunst von dem Standpunkte des Glaubens aus beurtheilt* (Leipzig: Wigand, 1842; reprint Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1967), 162; see in this respect W. Paletta, *Das Bildungsverständnis G.W.F. Hegels und die Bildungsvorstellungen der Linkshegelianer D.F. Strauss, B. Bauer, L. Feuerbach*, Dissertation, München, 1977, 109.

⁵⁰ Bauer, *Das entdeckte Christentum*, 200.

the product of the historical species-process that is thought,⁵¹ meaning that mankind produces itself as a creation of its own freedom,⁵² or in the struggle for its own liberation. In the philosophy of self-consciousness, man recognises himself not only as the artifice of his own liberty but also of relations of subordination, seeing himself as responsible for his own state of subjection. Self-consciousness, writes Bauer, “is neither peasant nor bourgeois nor noble, before it Jews and pagans are equal; it is not solely German or French. It cannot admit that there could be anything *tout court* separate from it or above it; it is the declaration of war and war itself, and when it attains its fullness as genuine self-consciousness, it is the victory over everything that wants to count as a monopoly, as privilege and exclusion.”⁵³ Self-consciousness thus affirms itself against the principle of exclusion, not as the expression of a determinate political form, but as “war itself;” so the term “self-consciousness”⁵⁴ seems to express in Bauer’s lexicon the practice through which universalism unfolds. It is in this sense that self-consciousness places itself above the differences of estate (peasant, bourgeois, noble), of religion (Jews and pagans), and of nationality (German or French). Self-consciousness is the dissolution of all these differences and of every distinction in kind, because in self-consciousness the universal is produced as the practice of a community. This practice is *war itself* in that it is the dissolution of existing relations. It is war upon tradition and all monopoly, privilege, and exclusion. It is not, however, a question of linking criticism to a redeeming praxis, because this very thought is itself the practice that gives reality to self-consciousness.

The nexus between liberty and thought is itself depicted politically. Participating in the *logos*, man puts into question all privilege and exclusion, validating the *generic* character of thinking. Privileges have as their corollary *liberties*, but liberties are by nature exclusive, thus always founded on a non-liberty. Liberty is a singular and not a plural because it is at the basis of the generic practice of thought, and is its product. This is the

⁵¹ Cf. Bauer, *Das entdeckte Christentum*, 200.

⁵² Man, writes Bauer, is “the product of himself and his own activity”: Bauer (1843), p. 84; man is “the work of his own freedom”: Bauer, *Das entdeckte Christentum*, 244.

⁵³ Bruno Bauer, “Die Fähigkeit der heutigen Juden und Christen, frei zu werden,” in Bauer, *Feldzüge der reinen Kritik*, 190.

⁵⁴ On the Bauerian notion of self-consciousness, as a re-elaboration of the Hegelian concept of absolute Spirit and as the propulsive force of history, see D. Moggach, “Absolute Spirit and Universal Self-Consciousness. Bruno Bauer’s Revolutionary Subjectivism,” *Dialogue*, XXVIII (1989), 235–56; and his *Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer*, esp. ch. 5.

Archimedean point from which to attack every exclusion, and it is in this spirit that Edgar Bauer, translating politically his brother's reflections, asks why the *plebs* should not be part of the people. The answer is given in the form of another question: "Has not the *plebs* a brain to think?"⁵⁵ Exclusion, every exclusion, has become illegitimate in light of the real universality of thought, of the truth that "every man has need of thinking." *The moment that the excluded demand to know the reason for their exclusion and contest it, they show that they are men endowed with thought.* From this moment onwards, the struggle becomes that between universal freedom and particular privileges. Universal freedom is conquered in the battles against the defenders of privilege: Freedom is the prize of this battle.⁵⁶ Universalism in potency, according to which "every man has need of thinking," becomes universalism *actu* at the moment man thinks, and in thinking intuitively the equality of all thinking beings. Equality is thus subordinate to freedom, which cannot but take all exclusivity to be scandalous, and which therefore cannot but oppose all inequalities that the privileged orders claim to be natural. Dissociating equality and the rights of man from nature, Bauer implicitly dissolves all rhetoric about natural inequalities. *Universalism is thus for Bauer a practice in which the excluded seek from the dominant forces the grounds for their exclusion, thereby posing a level of equality that prescind from previously existing relations.* Liberty is such only as a polemical concept, as a practice of liberation in which the excluded conquer for themselves the rights that had been denied them. The fact that everyone has need of thinking implies an *equal* right to think⁵⁷; this equality is the condition of possibility for universal freedom, which can, however, be attained only in practical opposition to that which does not correspond to self-consciousness.⁵⁸ Edgar Bauer writes, "Just as the repose of the free man is only death, so the repose of freedom must be called its demise."⁵⁹ This is a reformulation of Bruno Bauer's affirmation that self-consciousness is *war itself*. There exists no condition in which freedom is realised, because it is possible to speak of freedom only insofar as it is *conquered*.

⁵⁵ Edgar Bauer, *Der Streit der Kritik mit Kirche und Staat* (Charlottenburg: Egbert Bauer, 1843), in Pepperle, *Die Hegelsche Linke*, 708.

⁵⁶ Cf. Bauer, *Die Judenfrage*, 19.

⁵⁷ Cf. E. Bauer, *Der Streit der Kritik*, 705.

⁵⁸ Cf. B. Bauer, anon., *Die Posaune des jüngsten Gerichts über Hegel, den Atheisten und Antichristen. Ein Ultimatum* (Leipzig: Wigand, 1841; reprint Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1983), 82.

⁵⁹ E. Bauer, *Der Streit der Kritik*, 701.

Individuals “think” in that they can and do question the relations that make of them inferiors or subjects to another. This is political thought that engages with revolution – that is, with the political moment in which the prevailing relations of domination are destroyed because they are recognised to be false. The categories of politics become those of conflict: politics as polemics.

The famous apology of Menenius Agrippa in Shakespeare’s *Coriolanus* allows us to see at work the egalitarian erosion of differences that claim to be natural. In order to convince the plebeians to return to their post, Menenius Agrippa uses an organic metaphor according to which, for the proper functioning of the whole, it is necessary that each part perform its own duty: If a single part fails in its duty, the consequences are felt throughout the entire organism, including the part that tried to assert its own particular interest against the whole. The apology, however, reveals its falsity the moment it is uttered, because the very fact that the plebeians had gone on strike demonstrates that the alleged organic necessity of the whole was no longer operative. If the organicist metaphor demonstrates its own falsity, its *truth* content consists not in the organic articulation of the whole but precisely in that *part* which, in the practice of equality, validates its own dignity as equivalent to that of the whole. The struggle of the Roman plebeians imposes recognition of a universal scale of the *logos* through their own participation in discussions on the just.⁶⁰ This is the truth content within the falsity of organicism; Menenius Agrippa’s speech is the defence of what had already transpired through the imposition of the *logos* of the plebs and through its participation in the question of justice. The polemical conception of the universal delineated by Bruno Bauer, a conception that he merely sketched out only to abandon immediately afterwards, permits us perhaps to discern some problems in our own way of thinking of the concept of universality: from the imbrication of the universal in the excluded element, it is possible to rethink the universal not as neutrality, but as a *part* in a conflict.

Returning to Bauer, it remains to be seen whether the critique of the principle of exclusiveness reverberates through his whole political

⁶⁰ In this sense Jacques Rancière, *La Mésentente. Politique et philosophie* (Paris: Galilée, 1995), 49, writes, “Politics exists because those who do not have the right to be considered as speaking beings make themselves heard, and set up a community by making common the wrong which is nothing other than the clash, the contradiction between two worlds lodged in a single one.”

conceptuality. If even the identity of the people is given by means of an exclusion, the critique of the exclusionary principle is at the same time the critique of the concept of the people. It will be Bruno Bauer's brother Edgar who draws this consequence, extending the notion of the people to all who think – that is to say, to all who are capable of questioning through practice every relation of exclusion. He sees clearly that this means the loss of “the political concept of the people.”⁶¹ The people, as a political concept, is such only as an exclusive people, whose identity is established by the exclusion of a part, while the subject of politics in Bauer's conception includes all individuals as thinking beings.

Bauerian universalism presents itself not as a ready-made model to be realised in history but as a process articulated through the critique of the concept of the state. Bauer's universalistic option inscribes the possibility of emancipation in a conceptual horizon in which freedom is universal in that it *can* be conquered *by all*. This means that freedom has to do with a practice whose universality is attained by making common the singular practices of self-extrication and struggle against the exclusions that characterise the internal political geography of states. Struggle thus returns to the centre of the political stage, against every pretence of neutralisation, which continues to bear an exclusive character. Bauer intends to move along this axis of research, subjecting to criticism everything that impedes the possibility of conquering freedom. The objects of his reflection are the conditions of possibility of liberty, not its practical actualisation, because liberty is such only for those who conquer it directly in the contest of history. Precisely because it requires the subjective element of those who conquer it, freedom cannot be granted by the state or by anyone else, even by critique. One cannot be an object of freedom, because that would mean being the object of the freedom of someone else, and therefore being unfree. One can be only the subject of freedom. Critique indicates what hampers freedom. But it is then solely up to the individual agents on the battlefield of history to clear away the obstacles to their own freedom. No one, Bauer reiterates, can be obliged to be free; self-consciousness has arrived at the certainty of its freedom, and so leaves “to the unfree the freedom not to be free.”⁶² Bauer thus reformulates the universal

⁶¹ E. Bauer, *Der Streit der Kritik*, 700–1.

⁶² Bauer, *Das entdeckte Christentum*, 270; cf. also Bauer, “Neueste Schriften über die Judenfrage (1843),” 12.

character of modern freedom: it is not imposed upon all, even if –and this is the indispensable specificity of the modern concept of freedom – it cannot find support in the unfreedom of another. The presupposition of this affirmation is clearly the identity of liberty and independence: If my freedom were founded on the unfreedom of another, I would be dependent on the latter; if my own freedom were determined only on the basis of the other's unfreedom, then my freedom would cease to be freedom, because it would be locked in a logic of dependence. Even the concept of equality is extracted from this universal concept of freedom: Equality is the outcome of a concept of liberty that cannot be based on the unfreedom of any other.

Bauer's reflections help to bring to light the aporetic nature of the modern conception of freedom, a contradiction that exploded in the French Revolution but that was already announced in the political logic of Rousseau: that of forcing people to be free.⁶³ Here is the meaning of Bauer's philosophy of self-consciousness, which, having reached the certainty of its own freedom, leaves "to the unfree the freedom not to be free."⁶⁴ By Bauer's reckoning, the knowledge that allows us to overcome the contradictions contained in contractualist doctrines, and then manifested in the French Revolution, should have enabled critique to be an "epoch-making force," because it would leave to "everyone the freedom to become what he would,"⁶⁵ and so even to remain unfree. Because freedom in Bauer is inseparable from the struggle to attain it, it implies the self-consciousness of those who are in the process of emancipating themselves.

We must observe, however, in this position of Bauer's, a scarcely concealed aristocratic conception of freedom that looks with indifference upon those lacking sufficient courage to seize the liberty that lies at hand. Bauer's critique of liberalism is extraordinarily close to the later one of Nietzsche: "liberal institutions cease to be liberal as soon as they are obtained (. . .) As long as these institutions are still fought for, they produce entirely different effects: then, they powerfully promote liberty. (. . .) Aristocratic communities like Rome and Venice understood

⁶³ See J.J. Rousseau, *Du contrat social ou Principes du droit politique* (1762), in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. III (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), Book 1, ch. VII.

⁶⁴ Bauer, *Das entdeckte Christentum*, 270; cf. also Bauer, "Neueste Schriften über die Judenfrage (1843)," 12.

⁶⁵ Bauer, "Neueste Schriften über die Judenfrage (1844)" in *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, Heft 4, March, 1844, 12.

freedom in the very sense that I attribute to the word freedom: as something that one has and does *not* have, something that one *desires*, something that one *conquers*.⁶⁶ It is unnecessary to transform Bauer into Nietzsche's "thought arsenal"⁶⁷; what connects them, besides mutual recognition,⁶⁸ is the passage that leads from the *Vormärz* to the crisis of the philosophy of history and of the idea of salvation history (*Heilsgeschichte*).⁶⁹ Beyond the horizon of a progressive conception of history, the process now becomes a "polemology," a succession of battles in Bauer, and the struggle of estates and classes (*Stände- und Classenkampf*)⁷⁰ in Nietzsche. Liberty is entrusted to no teleology, but to struggle: It is "the prize of combat."⁷¹ Everyone has as much liberty as he succeeds in conquering with his own powers. This seems to be the outcome of Bauer's reflection. It should not be forgotten, though, that for Bauer, at least until 1848, the concept of freedom is necessarily universal, not in the sense that it must bring liberty to all, but in that it is *not exclusive*. With the collapse of the Revolutions of 1848, it is possible to see a significant change in Bauer's political attitude, a shift towards a sort of epochal pessimism. This, on the other hand, was already maturing in the mid-1840s,

⁶⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Götzen-Dämmerung oder wie man mit dem Hammer philosophiert* (1889), *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. G. Colli and M. Montinari (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1969), Bd. VI/3, 133–4.

⁶⁷ Barnikol refers to Stirner as follows: "Stirner, however, became Nietzsche's thought arsenal. Thus Bauer helped to overthrow his world, and saw it break down." [in German in the original – D.M.]: Barnikol, *Das entdeckte Christentum im Vormärz*, 134.

⁶⁸ On relations between Bauer and Nietzsche, see D. Tschizewskij, "Hegel et Nietzsche," in *Revue d'histoire de la philosophie*, III (1929), 321–47; Zvi Rosen, "Bruno Bauers und Friedrich Nietzsches Destruktion der bürgerlich-christlichen Welt," in *Jahrbuch des Instituts für Deutsche Geschichte*, ed. W. Grab, (1982), 151–72; E. Benz, "Nietzsches Ideen zur Geschichte des Christentums. 4. Nietzsche und Bruno Bauer," in *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, no. 56, (1937), pp. 259–77. Nietzsche wrote to Reinhart von Seydlitz on 26 October 1886: "I have basically three readers, namely Bruno Bauer, J. Burckhardt, Henri Taine, and the first of these is dead." F. Nietzsche, "Briefwechsel (1885–1886)," in *Briefwechsel. Kritische Ausgabe*, ed. G. Colli and M. Montinari (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1981), Bd. III/3, 271. [In German in the original – D.M.]

⁶⁹ Jürgen Gebhardt, "Karl Marx und Bruno Bauer," in A. Dempf, H. Arendt, F. Engel-Janosi, eds., *Politische Ordnung und menschliche Existenz* (München, Beck, 1962), 202–42, derives the position of Bauer and the Hegelian left from gnosticism and speaks of a *Heilsgeschichte* in Bauer and Marx. On the nexus between philosophy of history and "salvation history," the obligatory reference is to Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949).

⁷⁰ Fr. Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente. Herbst 1887 bis März 1888*, in *Werke. Kritische Ausgabe*, Bd. VIII/ 2 (1970), 159.

⁷¹ Bauer, *Die Judenfrage*, 19.

when, concentrating on the study of the French Revolution and its consequences,⁷² Bruno Bauer saw in democracy itself a new form of dictatorship taking shape.

⁷² On Bauer and the French Revolution, see L. Lambrecht, "Zum historischen Einsatz der wissenschaftlichen und politischen Studien Bruno Bauers zur Französischen Revolution," in *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, Bd. 8 (1989), 741–52; and Tomba, *Crisi e critica*, 227–72.

Republican Rigorism and Emancipation in Bruno Bauer

Douglas Moggach

Anyone seeking to defend Bruno Bauer's republican credentials faces formidable obstacles, many of them erected by Bauer himself. His notorious opposition to claims for Jewish emancipation in Prussia; the critical, indeed often supercilious tone of his journals, the *Allgemeine Literatur Zeitung* and the *Norddeutsche Blätter* (NDB), where he castigated the political and ethical shortcomings of currents resisting the Restoration regime: These and other attitudes contribute to the longstanding impression of Bauer as a renegade from the progressive movement, or as entirely alien to its spirit. Marx's depictions of him in the *Holy Family* and the *German Ideology* powerfully reinforce this image.¹ David Leopold has recently made a persuasive case, based on careful textual analysis, that Bauer's negative stance on Jewish emancipation disqualifies him as a republican thinker.² This was a view shared by many of Bauer's own contemporaries.³ Some

¹ Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, "The Holy Family, or Critique of Critical Criticism," *Collected Works*, vol. 4 (New York: International Publishers, 1975), 5–211; and "The German Ideology," vol. 5 (1976), 19–539, esp. 97–116.

² David Leopold, "The Hegelian Antisemitism of Bruno Bauer," *History of European Ideas* 25 (1999), 179–206. For a different view of discontinuity in Bauer's thought, see Warren Breckman, "Diagnosing the 'German Misery.' Radicalism and the Problem of National Character, 1830 to 1848," in D. E. Barclay and E. D. Weitz, eds., *Between Reform and Revolution. German Socialism and Communism from 1840 to 1990* (New York: Berghahn, 1998), 45–6.

³ Julius Carlebach, *Karl Marx and the Radical Critique of Judaism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), 138–84.

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of the immediate consequences can be seen in the narrowing circle of his literary and political collaborators. Ernst Barnikol has pointed to the small group of contributors to the *NDB* and attributes Bauer's frequent use of pseudonyms in this publication to a concealment of this fact, as well as to an effort to circumvent the censor.⁴

Yet the dominant interpretation is difficult to sustain when we examine other writings by Bauer from the period 1840–9. His ongoing, even exacerbated problems with censorship alert us to the fact that he remained highly suspect to the authorities.⁵ They had good reason for their concerns. His writings of the mid-1840s, simultaneous to his analyses of the Jewish question, supported Jacobinism, celebrated the Enlightenment and its emancipatory impact on Germany, and described Hegel as expressing these liberating tendencies in the highest reaches of thought.⁶ With his brother Edgar, newly released from imprisonment for *lèse-majesté*, Bauer founded the Berlin Democratic Society in August 1848. His two electoral addresses, delivered at the height of revolutionary ferment in 1848–9, defended popular sovereignty and the right of insurrection and proposed concrete measures whereby the progressive forces could seize and maintain the initiative, issuing a constitution on the authority of the people and rejecting all concessions to the Junkers and the king.⁷ While he criticised the failings of liberal and socialist currents, his denunciations of the old order were unrelenting.⁸

⁴ Ernst Barnikol, *Bruno Bauer, Darstellung und Quellen*, unpublished manuscript, International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam, *Quellentext*, #95, pp. 19, 26.

⁵ Bruno Bauer, ed., *Aktenstücke zu den Verhandlungen über die Beschlagnahme der "Geschichte der Politik, Kultur und Aufklärung des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts," von Bruno Bauer* (Christiania: C. C. Werner, 1844).

⁶ Bruno Bauer, *Das entdeckte Christenthum. Eine Erinnerung an das 18. Jahrhundert und ein Beitrag zur Krisis des 19* (Zürich and Winterthur: Verlag des literarischen Comptoirs, 1843).

⁷ Bruno Bauer, "Erste Wahlrede von 1848," and "Verteidigungsrede Bruno Bauers vor den Wahlmännern des vierten Wahlbezirkes am 22.2. 1849," in Ernst Barnikol, *Bruno Bauer: Studien und Materialien*, ed. P. Riemer and H. –M. Sass (Assen: van Gorcum, 1972), 518–25, 525–31.

⁸ It is important to note here that Bauer's political orientation underwent a significant change after 1848, when he deemed the republican project to have failed. In a text published in English, "The Present Position of the Jews," *New York Daily Tribune*, June 7, 1852, Bauer assumes an anti-Semitic stance based on the idea of a racial incompatibility between Jews and Europeans. This is in contrast to his early work, where the Jewish religion is characterised as a historical form of alienated spirit and particularity but not as a manifestation of a permanent racial characteristic. Bauer's late work is highly problematic in its insistence on anti-Semitic themes. Approximating conservative critiques of modernity, it represents a break with his early republicanism; but the discontinuity in Bauer's

I want to propose an interpretation that might clarify this confused situation. This is the thesis that Bauer's political stance in the *Vormärz* is best described as a republican rigorism.⁹ It has been argued recently that republicanism reformulates the distinction of negative and positive liberty to stress the ideal of nondomination, a broader version of negative freedom than the liberal definition of (empirical) noninterference.¹⁰ Here it is not the fact of being impeded in one's purposes that constitutes a primary violation of liberty; republicanism challenges rather the existence of relations of domination that, whether or not they actually involve concrete acts of interference at any specific time, make such interference an implicit possibility. Some further distinctions within republican thought might prove useful, especially to characterise the nineteenth-century German variant. A more lax form of republicanism stresses freedom as nondomination by external forces but leaves the personality of the republican citizen unexamined; this stance is compatible with a juridical account of republicanism as a defence of rights, the compossibility of freedoms in their external usage, independent of the motivations of juridical subjects. This version need not invoke an idea of positive freedom or self-transcendence, because the conditions for emancipation are satisfied if the subject is exempt from unjustifiable external constraints, and from the institutional possibility that these might be exerted; the substance of what subjects want, the content or matter of their maxims, is irrelevant in this perspective, provided that their actions do not impinge adversely on those of others. This corresponds to the broader republican form of negative freedom but can be described as "lax" because it limits its attention to the possibility of *external* coercion. A second, more rigorous form of republicanism places stringent demands on subjects to eliminate all types of heteronomous influences, internal as well as external, and requires, besides negative freedom, a positive self-transformation – though, as we will see, this latter form admits degrees of stringency. This attitude entails a modification of the distinction between right and morality, in that inner

thought is better situated in 1852 than in 1842. See Douglas Moggach, *The Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁹ Norberto de Sousa, "Ciceronian Republicanism and the History of Civil Society," unpublished ms., 1999, with reference to Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Officiis*, trans. Walter Miller (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1913), argues that Cicero set more exacting moral standards for active citizens than for those whose freedom was limited to property rights.

¹⁰ Philip Pettit, *Republicanism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997); Quentin Skinner, "A Third Concept of Liberty," *London Review of Books*, vol. 24, no. 7, 4 April 2002, 16–18.

motivations now become directly relevant to political activity. In its most demanding formulations, Bauer's republican rigorism consists in a denial of the difference between right and morality: It demands that actions in the sphere of right must themselves be governed by universalistic maxims. While such a position is not faithful to the Kantian tradition or to Hegel's own treatment of the subject in the *Philosophy of Right*, it is at least consistent with a certain reading of Hegel on history, which is decisive for Bauer's account. My argument is not intended to exonerate Bauer on the Jewish question. Nor is it a vindication as a matter of intellectual biography, but an exercise in retrieval of a specifically Hegelian republicanism. While Bauer's most extreme positions may not be an inevitable consequence of his republicanism, which contains other options, neither do they constitute a radical deviation from it.

I. GERMAN REPUBLICANISM

The study of republicanism is an important facet of contemporary research in political theory, differentiating this current from liberalism and socialism and attributing to it a major role in the thinking of modernity. The central republican idea is that the practices and institutions of citizenship are integral to the experience of freedom; they are not merely instrumental to economic purposes, as in liberalism, nor are they dispensable in favour of economic management, as in some types of socialism. Republicanism also involves a complex interweaving of themes of positive and negative liberty, which has been the subject of much discussion.¹¹ Extensive studies by the Cambridge School have focused on English, American, Italian, and French sources.¹² German republicanism has been less recognised, partly because it flourishes in the nineteenth century when, it is thought, other forms of republicanism are experiencing an eclipse, partly because its Hegelian roots have made it suspect for holding an untenably metaphysical view of freedom. Recent work on

¹¹ E.g., Quentin Skinner, "The Idea of Negative Liberty. Philosophical and Historical Perspectives," in Richard Rorty, J. B. Schneewind, and Quentin Skinner, eds., *Philosophy in History. Essays on the Historiography of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 193–221.

¹² J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975); Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, vol. 1, *The Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff, eds., *Wealth and Virtue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

Hegel has, however, contributed to dispelling traditional but ill-founded images of his work and has shown the compatibilities between his theory of ethical life, and republican institutions and beliefs.¹³ Among its significant original features, German republicanism in the *Vormärz* defends a more genuinely Hegelian understanding of freedom, based on political community as an enhancement of individual and collaborative possibilities. This principle is a critique both of liberal possessive individualism, which equates freedom with private rights, and of traditionalist religious or ethnic allegiances; it also presents itself as an alternative to the socialist programme, one that resists the assimilation of the person into the class.¹⁴ It criticises subjective and objective forms of domination, reformulating the relation between right (external action) and morality (inner motivation). It interrogates the relation between state and economy, with attention to problems of poverty, exclusion, and alienation, and to the possibilities of economic reorganisation; and it raises the issue of legitimate forms of political resistance and constitutional change, defending popular sovereignty and the struggle to secure it. Within this current, degrees of rigorism, the extent to which inner motivations are taken to be politically relevant, differentiate various authors and texts. Arnold Ruge's republicanism, for example, differs from that of his contemporary Bruno Bauer, because of the latter's insistence that political action be judged according to stringent moral criteria (including estimations of the motive and intent of political actors), whereas Ruge retains the Kantian and Hegelian distinction of right and morality. This allows him to envisage political-juridical reforms as components of a transformation strategy, while Bauer is more averse to gradualism, which he thinks threatens the purity of republican principles.¹⁵

While I cannot develop this argument fully here, what is striking about *Vormärz* republicanism, for all its inner variations, is its attention to the social question. Like the republicanism of the eighteenth century, German thinkers in the *Vormärz* share the view of a fundamental

¹³ Alan Patten, *Hegel's Idea of Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

¹⁴ Douglas Moggach, "New Goals and New Ways: Republicanism and Socialism in 1848," in Douglas Moggach and Paul Leduc Browne, eds., *The Social Question and the Democratic Revolution. Marx and the Legacy of 1848* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2000), 49–69.

¹⁵ Ruge's republicanism, and his political activities in 1848, merits closer examination. See especially his texts "Zur Kritik des gegenwärtigen Staats- und Völkerrechts" (1840), and "Die Hegelsche Rechtsphilosophie und die Politik unsrer Zeit" (1842), in G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts*, ed. Helmut Reichelt (Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein, 1972), 598–623, 624–49. See also Enrico Rambaldi, *Le origini della sinistra hegeliana* (Florence: Nuova Italia, 1966), 33–4.

opposition between virtue and commerce.¹⁶ This classical republican theme, in the forms attested in eighteenth-century sources, had invoked, however, a homogeneous citizenry, little differentiated in economic function and interest. Sarah Maza has recently stressed the political importance of the homogenous identity of citizens in the French Revolution, where diversity was viewed as a differentiation in terms of rights and privileges, thus as a bulwark of the old order;¹⁷ while, with reference to England, John Barrell has traced some of the elements, particularly aesthetic, that figure in the new nineteenth-century posing of the problem of social cohesion.¹⁸ In place of the presupposed unity of interest typical of earlier formulations, the new republicanism of the nineteenth century recognises a complex division of labour due to manufacturing and the beginnings of industrialisation, and marked by the social question, or the emergence of new forms of urban poverty.¹⁹ Republicans must develop new views of what makes a common social interest possible in situations where a homogeneous citizenry can no longer be taken for granted. German republicans in the *Vormärz*, and especially Bruno Bauer, respond to this problem with a Hegelian account of positive liberty, according to which private interests must not be assumed as decisive for political action, but must be consciously reshaped through critique, and through participation in the struggle for rational political institutions. Only thus, in self-transcendence by the particulars of their limited private ends, can a genuine universal interest be attained. This view differentiates German republicans like Bauer from their eighteenth-century counterparts, who for the most part had defended the broad version of negative liberty, seen as the absence of external domination. The urgency of the appeal to the universal expresses the very difficulty of attaining it within the modern culture of diremption,²⁰ whose sharp oppositions were exacerbated by the social and economic changes wrought by modern revolutions.

¹⁶ Cf. Hont and Ignatieff, *Wealth and Virtue*; Raimund Ottow, *Markt, Tugend, Republik* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1996).

¹⁷ Sarah Maza, "The Social Imaginary of the Revolution. The Third Estate, the National Guard, and the Absent Bourgeoisie," in Colin Jones and Dror Wahrman, eds., *The Age of Cultural Revolutions. Britain and France, 1750–1820* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 122.

¹⁸ John Barrell, *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt. "The Body of the Public"* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1986).

¹⁹ For another account of this process, see Gareth Stedman Jones, "Engels and the Invention of the Catastrophist Conception of the Industrial Revolution," in this volume.

²⁰ G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik, I, Sämtliche Werke*, ed. H. Glockner, Band 12 (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1964), 88, 90–1.

II. BAUER ON FREEDOM, UNIVERSALITY, AND INFINITE SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

In Bruno Bauer's work, the universal idea of freedom assumes determinate shape in the will and activity of individuals, who act not as unconscious bearers of a transcendent purpose but as responsible, creative, autonomous subjects.²¹ The universal must not be treated as a transcendent or hypostatised entity or force, as Bauer thinks Hegel himself sometimes does, because this would be to impose a new form of heteronomy on subjective action. A universal perspective is opened rather when we reflect on the entire course of history as a process of alienation and struggles for freedom; this reflection directs us to find specific nodal points in the present where effective, transformative action is possible. The essence of liberation is the extricating of oneself from existing relations of domination, and the unrelenting struggle against their objective forms. This inner and outer combat, waged without compromise, is the true universal described by the theory of infinite self-consciousness. Against the classics, Bauer claims that emancipated humanity recognises no fixed or substantial ends; the stress is rather on individual self-determination and the constant overcoming of limits: not a *telos* given by nature, but free, autotelic acts. But Bauer contends that this robust modern freedom has been misconstrued by the Enlightenment, which could not transcend the horizon of a particularised human nature, dominated by permanent and ahistorical needs and attitudes, or which confused historical acquisitions with natural characteristics.²² Such a naturalisation of the human being, like that performed by the classics, reflects an imperfect understanding of self-creation in history. This inadequacy is manifest in the static materialism of the Enlightenment, and in its appeals to a fixed human nature. Bauer contends, instead, that any such natural characteristics, and all particularities that want to count as valid without being subject to the fire of criticism and self-transcendence, are a limit to be overcome, and not a determinative end of action. Here is the meaning of positive freedom in Bauer, and the ground of its necessity. It is the core of his republicanism.

²¹ Bruno Bauer (anonymous), *Hegels Lehre von der Religion und Kunst von dem Standpunkte des Glaubens aus beurtheilt* (Leipzig: Otto Wigand, 1842), 166–7.

²² This is one of the central themes of Bruno Bauer, *Das entdeckte Christenthum. Eine Erinnerung an das 18. Jahrhundert und ein Beitrag zur Krisis des 19* (Zürich und Winterthur: Verlag des literarischen Comptoirs, 1843); see also Douglas Moggach, "‘Free Means Ethical’: Bruno Bauer’s Critical Idealism," *Owl of Minerva*, vol. 33, no. 1, Fall/Winter 2001–2, 1–24.

Infinite self-consciousness defines itself by opposition to all forms of heteronomy, whether that of political or ecclesiastical tutelage, or of uncriticised particular interest. Its infinity requires it to move beyond this opposition, and to realise itself objectively as the principle of a new political and social order. Otherwise it remains a mere "ought" or a spurious infinite, of which Bauer is unsparingly critical.²³ Without this universal interest, the dissolution of ethical life into a multiplicity of mutually repelling atomic points is an impending threat. The defence of universality differentiates Bauer's pre-1850 position from that of other Left-Hegelians like Max Stirner or Karl Schmidt, who find the essence of modernity to consist precisely in the liberation of the particular from all universalistic claims.²⁴ Mere particularity is the principle of what Bauer calls modern mass society, *die Masse*, whose attribute is private interest, or thoughtless acquiescence in the existing order. Its unreflective existence violates the normative demands of modernity, in that the identification with ends as one's own, posited by conscious choice, is now a tenet of an authentic subjectivity.²⁵ Yet, dialectically, the mass is an extremely modern phenomenon. It is one of the results of the French Revolution, which hastened and validated the dissolution of the traditional order of estates, with their differential rights and privileges.²⁶ Among its forms is private economic interest, which according to Bauer is the mainspring of action for the modern bourgeoisie, and which demarcates the limits of its political involvement.²⁷ Standing opposed to the *Masse* is the *Volk* as a revolutionary subject; this is not the people of some earlier forms of civic humanism, whose independence was won through land ownership,²⁸ but

²³ See, for example, Bauer's early critique of Kant in his 1829 *Über die Prinzipien des Schönen. De pulchri principiis. Eine Preisschrift*, ed. Douglas Moggach und Winfried Schultze (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1996).

²⁴ See the texts by David Leopold and Eric v.d. Luft in this volume.

²⁵ Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity* (Concord, Ont.: Anansi, 1991), 109–21; Robert Pippin, "Hegel, Freedom, the Will," in Ludwig Siep, ed., *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997), 31–53.

²⁶ See the text by Massimiliano Tomba in this volume.

²⁷ Bruno Bauer, "Die Septembertage 1792 und die ersten Kämpfe der Parteien der Republik in Frankreich," *Denkwürdigkeiten zur Geschichte der neueren Zeit seit der Französischen Revolution*. Nach den Quellen und Original Memoiren bearbeitet und herausgegeben von Bruno Bauer und Edgar Bauer (Charlottenburg: Verlag von Egbert Bauer, 1843–4), part I, 6.

²⁸ See Hont and Ignatieff, *Wealth and Virtue*; but for a different view of the social composition of the republican people cf. Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance. Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in an Age of Classicism and Tyranny* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966).

the people as forged in the combat against privilege and hierarchy, in the French Revolution.²⁹ This event was the crucible of forces both of decay and of progress. The battle has yet to be resolved, Bauer thinks, but the moment of decision is at hand.

Bauer's anonymous text *Hegels Lehre von der Religion und Kunst* [*Hegel's Doctrine of Religion and Art*], of 1842, develops the theme of the historical productivity of spirit as freedom, requiring no forces transcendent of individuality, but seeing individuality itself as the vehicle for the immanent universal.

Reason is the true, creative power, for it produces itself as infinite self-consciousness, and its ongoing creation is the "rich production which is world-history." (Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 18). As the only power which exists, spirit can therefore be determined by nothing other than itself, or its essence is freedom. This is not to be understood as if freedom were simply one of the properties which men possess among others. On the contrary, "all properties of spirit exist only through freedom, all are only means for freedom, all seek and bring forth only freedom." "Freedom is the only truth [*Wahrhafte*] of spirit." Freedom is the infinite power of spirit, whereby I am dependent on nothing other [than myself], that is, that I am always only self-relating [*bei mir selbst*] even in all oppositions and contradictions, and in all relations and determinations, since all of them are posited only by myself and in my self-determination. "Spirit is the self-relation, which is self-consciousness." Freedom, the only purpose [*Zweck*] of spirit, is also the only purpose of history, and history is nothing other than spirit's becoming conscious of its freedom, or the becoming of real [*wirklichen*], free, infinite self-consciousness. (ibid., 20–3)³⁰

In characterising infinite self-consciousness, Bauer resists the accusation that his theory is an empty formalism. It involves assessing objective, historically evolved possibilities, and judging among them: Its content appears by reflection on the entire historical process, and the situation of the present within it. Bauer takes up the objection to the vacuity of criticism in a text of 1840; here he is referring directly to the relation of his critical theory to the gospels and the Christian message, but the argument is equally applicable to his overall conception of history.

If the procedure of criticism seems uniform, as the repetition of one and the same act, this comes from its ideal simplicity and does not constitute an objection to it. For, to express it abstractly, it is the pure self-subsistence of . . . self-consciousness

²⁹ Bruno Bauer, *Geschichte der Politik, Kultur und Aufklärung des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts, Erster Band. Deutschland während der ersten vierzig Jahre des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Charlottenburg: Verlag von Egbert Bauer, 1843), vii.

³⁰ Bruno Bauer, *Hegels Lehre*, 162–3. [All translations of Bauer cited here are my own – D.M.]

which wants to be finally with itself even in the given, the positive . . . If, as the activity of this self-consciousness, criticism is always merely the one [*das Eine*], it is the one which is necessary after millennial striving, or if it appears uniform, it is not the fault of criticism, but rather stems from the nature of the object, that it always simply lets particularities which want to count immediately as universals suffer their fate.

It is only in the beginning that criticism seems destructive, dissolving, or to be empty, unfilled implicitude. In itself that pure self-consciousness . . . is not empty, nor it is arbitrarily and contingently posited, but in its simplicity it bears the result produced by the entire previous historical development. When this pure implicitude fills and mediates itself through the process of criticism, it takes up into itself the entire content . . . which corresponds to it, but it thereby takes up this content on the one spiritual ground, and here in this concrete universality it reproduces the contents in a form which overcomes the limits of the previous conception.³¹

The perspective of infinite self-consciousness is that of determinate negation, grasping the implicit possibilities and contradictions at the heart of the present and undermining all efforts to sustain the existent against the progress of reason and freedom. It thus fulfils the millennial struggles for emancipation that are the essence of history.

III. BAUER'S REPUBLICANISM

Bauer's explicitly political application of the theory of self-consciousness begins in 1840, though with anticipations in his previous work. In *Die evangelische Landeskirche Preußens und die Wissenschaft* [*The Evangelical State Church of Prussia and Science*], Bauer describes the genuine state as the agency of historical progress. The state manifests the universality of the rational will through its ability to express the consciousness of freedom in ever-renewed forms, and to impart to this consciousness an objective shape, though one subject to constant revision. In the wake of the Enlightenment critique of privilege and hierarchy, no particular interest could any longer claim immediate validity, or maintain itself against the flow of history. Bauer attacks the conservative view that the state was a mere agency of external constraint, to be supplemented by the churches' ministration to souls. He rejects this derogation of the spiritual reality of the political realm, seeing in the true state the objective configurations

³¹ Bruno Bauer, *Kritik der evangelischen Geschichte des Johannes* (Bremen: Carl Schünemann, 1840), 182.

and dynamism of freedom.³² In his next polemical intervention, “Der christliche Staat und unsere Zeit” [“The Christian State and Our Times”], of 1841,³³ Bauer denounces not only the Restoration state of Friedrich Wilhelm IV, governed by irrational privileges and immunities, but also the formal *Rechtsstaat*, or liberal constitutionalism. For Bauer, both these positions define freedom as private interest, religious or economic; but because they represent mere particularity, these attitudes must be eliminated in the name of autonomy. Bauer maintains that Hegel’s view of freedom as universality is far superior to particularistic liberal views, even if the *Philosophy of Right* is inconsistent or incomplete. This is Bauer’s provocative claim at a political banquet in Berlin in 1841, which led to his dismissal from his university post on the direct intervention of the king.³⁴ The overcoming of egoistic atomism by the moral self-consciousness is the prerequisite for the republic, or the free state. Republicanism had to extirpate this atomistic attitude at its very core, in the subjective maxims governing individual behaviour, and not only in its outer manifestations. Otherwise autonomy would remain partial or illusory.

Bauer’s anonymous *Posaune des jüngsten Gerichts* [*Trumpet of the Last Judgement*]³⁵ (November 1841) and its important sequel alluded to previously, *Hegels Lehre* (of early 1842), interpret Hegel as an advocate of revolution, to call the republic into being. Hegel’s system necessitated the overthrow of both the church and the existing state; conservatives and pietists, whose language and posturing Bauer mockingly adopted, correctly saw Hegel as the most dangerous adversary of the Restoration. In Hegelian absolute spirit, properly understood, all religious pretensions were shown to be groundless, while the absolute itself dissolved into the critical activities of conscious individual subjects. There remained no transcendent forces, distinct from individuals and their combats for freedom. While repudiating transcendent universals, Bauer insisted that Hegel also criticised particularity for trying to evade the flux of history. Only by

³² Bruno Bauer (anon., 1st ed.) *Die evangelische Landeskirche Preußens und die Wissenschaft* (Leipzig: Otto Wigand, 1840). On the polemical intentions of the text, which might appear to endorse the Hohenzollern state, see Moggach, *The Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer*, ch. 4.

³³ Bruno Bauer, “Der christliche Staat und unsere Zeit,” *Hallische Jahrbücher für deutsche Wissenschaft und Kunst*, 7–12 June 1841, nos. 135–40, pp. 537–58.

³⁴ Instruction of October 14, 1841, to Staats-Minister von Rochow, reproduced in E. Barnikol, *Bruno Bauer: Studien und Materialien*, 504–5.

³⁵ Bruno Bauer (anon.), *Die Posaune des jüngsten Gerichts über Hegel den Atheisten und Antichristen. Ein Ultimatum* (Leipzig: Otto Wigand, 1841).

transforming their own limited particularity could individuals become the organs through which a genuine, immanent universal attained historically effective form. Subjects must appear as universal actors, and the objective realm confronting them must show itself as a purposive order, responding to subjects' strivings for rational freedom. The objective realm must be seen as the record of acts of resistance and creation, stemming from an inner relation of self-consciousness to itself. This is why the reference to the inner motivations of subjects is so important for Bauer. By assimilating the principle of universality, subjectivity changed its own character, liberating itself from the impress of heteronomy and the confines of particular interest. But this relation was not a solely inward experience, because reason must realise itself in the world, overcoming the oppositions that mark it a false universal. The realisation of reason occurred though a historical sequence, in which alienation figured prominently, because the infinite depths of reason and freedom could not yet be plumbed. Bauer described self-consciousness, this immanent and subjective universality, as the motive force of history, generating new historical content by taking up and transforming the given. As Bauer had declared in his earliest writing, his 1829 prize manuscript on art, the issue was not only the subjective realisation of the concept but also the fate of the idea³⁶: the unity of thought and being, of subjective and objective. The concept of freedom had to be realised in individual subjectivities, but could not lodge itself tranquilly there. It had to pass into objectivity, and prove its power against the forces of repression, against irrational forms of state, against religion, and against social hierarchy.

The call for permanent revolution that was at the heart of Bauer's political conception in the *Vormärz* can be understood as application of an ethical idealism, one of whose sources lies in Kantian morality. Kant defines heteronomous principles as denoting an external object to which the will must conform. He distinguishes two types: Empirical heteronomous principles designate objects of sensibility that we allow to determine our maxims, while rational heteronomous principles refer to intelligible goods that are ostensibly independent of and prior to the moral will.³⁷ The latter type can be further distinguished into two forms: first, the determination of the will with reference to universals that claim

³⁶ Bruno Bauer, *Prinzipien des Schönen*, [94b–95b], [97b].

³⁷ John Rawls, "Themes in Kant's Moral Philosophy," in Eckart Förster, ed., *Kant's Transcendental Deductions* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1989), 97.

a transcendent status (e.g., Plato's Ideas); and second, perfectionism or *Vollkommenheit*,³⁸ doctrines of perfection for the sake of which an action is performed (e.g., Leibniz). Unlike utilitarianism, which is an application of empirical practical reason aiming at happiness or need-satisfaction, perfectionism is a type of pure practical reason, aiming at freedom, but according to Kant it misconstrues the worth of moral actions in terms of their effects, rather than their maxims, or else it builds the anticipated effects of an action illicitly into the maxim itself.³⁹ Bauer accepts Kant's critique of empirical heteronomy and of transcendent forms of rational heteronomy, and makes it central to his own criticism of the reign of particular interest and of false universals. But his own position resembles very closely the second form of rational heteronomy designated by Kant: It is akin to perfectionism, in the sense that action, and its supporting maxims, are validated by their contribution to historical progress. In contrast to Kant, Bauer thus equates perfectionism and autonomy, as an uncompromising commitment to refashion political and social relations and institutions. Subjects acquire autonomy by freeing themselves from particular interests, and by repudiating transcendent universals, namely those religious and political institutions that assert their independence from self-consciousness and claim exemption from historical change. This autonomy is demonstrated objectively in the clash of opposing principles, in open combat to transform the state, against those who would preserve its retrograde forms.⁴⁰ Bauer denounced the *ancien régime* and its Restoration surrogates as a feudal system of tutelage and irrational privileges.⁴¹ By asserting a fallacious universality, a claim to be underivable from the insight and struggles of its people, the authoritarian state merely sanctified an exclusive, particularistic view of the people and contributed to their dissolution into a mass. Thus the unacceptable form of rational heteronomy was conjoined, historically

³⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. L. W. Beck (New York: Macmillan, 1956), 33–42; *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. H. J. Paton (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 10–11.

³⁹ I have adapted this argument from my article "Free Means Ethical," 15–16.

⁴⁰ Bruno Bauer, *Posaune*, 82.

⁴¹ See, for example, Bruno Bauer, "Theologische Schamlosigkeit," *Deutsche Jahrbücher für Wissenschaft und Kunst*, 15–18 November 1841, nos. 117–20, 465–79; (anonymous) "Bekenntnisse einer schwachen Seele," *Deutsche Jahrbücher*, 23–24 June, 1842, nos. 148–9, 589–96; "Rezension. *Die Geschichte des Lebens Jesu mit steter Rücksicht auf die vorhandenen Quellen dargestellt* von Dr. von Ammon. Leipzig, 1842," in Arnold Ruge (ed.), *Anekdoten zur neuesten deutschen Philosophie und Publizistik*, vol. 2 (Zürich und Winterthur: Verlag des literarischen Comptoirs, 1843), 163.

and conceptually, to tendencies towards empirical heteronomy. The state as transcendent universal thwarted the emancipatory drive of its people (but only temporarily, as Bauer was convinced before 1848), and it concealed the source of its authority behind a religious veil. Bauer maintained that the state, and not religion, was the principal adversary.⁴² He insisted that the decisive historical question, and the key issue of 1848, was to prove the source of the state's authority. Did this foundation lie in tradition and religious sanction, or in the popular will? This question admitted no compromise. But it also exceeded the scope of merely political struggle. Bauer asserted that his objective was social emancipation.⁴³ The social question, the polarisations and crises of civil society to which Hegel had been alert, could be resolved not by direct appeals to the particular interests of one class, as many socialists erroneously believed, but by a common republican struggle against privilege in all its forms. The result of this combat would be the attainment of justice in all spheres of social life.⁴⁴ But this struggle would succeed only if its partisans embodied genuine universal interests and true (perfectionist) autonomy; if the struggle were regarded as the defence of one set of particular interests against another, it was doomed to failure, because then the validity of empirical heteronomy would remain unchallenged.

If Kantian ethics, critically appropriated, provides important elements in Bauer's understanding of autonomy, Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* is also fundamental for his republicanism. It buttresses Bauer's positions not in its institutional prescriptions, nor in its own distinction of right and morality, but in the normative content it assigns to modernity, and the historical narrative that sustains the text. Hegel describes the free and infinite personality as the highest political accomplishment of the modern age.⁴⁵ Paragraph 260 of the *Philosophy of Right* expresses two forms in which this universality appears in *Sittlichkeit* or ethical life: first, outward expansion, or engagement with and refashioning of objectivity in light of subjective purposes, and second, inner conscious reflection into unity.⁴⁶ The attainment of universality or rational freedom by modern subjects requires that both these dimensions be present. For Hegel, the realisation

⁴² Bruno Bauer, *Die gute Sache der Freiheit und meine eigene Angelegenheit* (Zürich und Winterthur: Verlag des literarischen Comptoirs, 1842), 218–19.

⁴³ Bruno Bauer, "Verteidigungsrede," 522.

⁴⁴ Bruno Bauer, "Erste Wahlrede," 529.

⁴⁵ G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen W. Wood, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 20–1.

⁴⁶ Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, §260, pp. 282–3.

of reason is not a mere “ought” or a spurious infinite,⁴⁷ reproducing an unbridgeable rift between particular and universal, the forms of being and the forms of thought. It is a unity in which reason shows itself to be an effective power, a causal force that can change objectivity in its own image. This process possesses, moreover, in comprehending reason, a point of repose, or of reflection back into unity. Recognising this duality of modern freedom, Bauer contends that the historical process, embodying reason and autonomy, is both an open-ended objective striving, and a subjective completion or return to unity within the rational self. He depicts these developments in an aesthetic register, as the synthesis of sublimity and beauty. The objective side is a sublime struggle to reshape the objective order in compliance with the concept of rational freedom (*Sittlichkeit* being understood as the accord of outer order with the ethical will); the subjective side is the beautiful self, which reshapes itself as a vehicle of universality.⁴⁸ Bauer’s concept of infinite self-consciousness maintains these two sides. History is the becoming of freedom and self-awareness, the record of struggles for liberation, but also the saga of alienation, which is necessary to discover the meaning of rational autonomy. Bauer’s republicanism entails the repudiation of ideas of freedom based on particularism, whether religious, economic, or political. It is simultaneously the critique of hypostatized or false universals, transcending the power of individuals. These include the absolutist state and the fetishistic objects of religious belief. In the emerging republic of self-consciousness, all abasement of human powers before transcendent and heteronomous forces must be overcome. Only the subject who has already acquired a high degree of rationality and autonomy can participate in this labour, as a freely self-determined task. Here the reflexively integrated beautiful self, acting from motives of disinterestedness, manifests the historically appropriate republican attitude.

Subjective understandings of freedom must, however, pass into objectivity and not remain in self-enclosed inner certainty. They must furnish maxims of practical activity, directive of political and social engagement. But in giving voice to what they comprehend as universal interests, political actors must also confront their own limited subjectivity. They must not simply abstract from their particular interests and identities, or refrain from expressing them, or translate them into politically

⁴⁷ G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (London: Allen and Unwin, 1969), 227–34.

⁴⁸ Bruno Bauer, *Hegels Lehre*, 162–7.

acceptable communicative acts. They must instead radically transform them. This position may be compared with current debates about deliberative democracy and public discourse: Rawls's distinction of background and political cultures in a liberal polity is perhaps relevant here.⁴⁹ For Rawls, arguments deriving from the background culture may intrude into the political sphere only insofar as they can be reformulated as public reasons, invoking generally accepted norms rather than sectional religious or moral beliefs; but provided they meet this criterion, they are not precluded from political expression merely because they originate in a non-liberal "comprehensive doctrine," or understanding of the good. Some critics of Rawls treat as irreceivable in the political forum any judgements that derive from religious or traditionalist moral positions; these may be legitimate in private or familial transactions, but, even refurbished as public reasons, may not extend their reach into public affairs.⁵⁰ Bauer's rigorism is still more exigent than this. For him, claims based on a traditional identity are not admissible even in the private realm, because they imply that subjects could appear as universalistic political actors while defending or concealing particular, irrational interests, or while they are still governed by heteronomous impulses and ideas. These, rather than remaining tacit, must be purged. Bauer describes this process as the self-transcendence of particularity, or the self's reflexive return to unity. The background culture too must be revolutionised for freedom to be actual. When, from his newly acquired socialist perspective, Marx challenges Bauer on the Jewish question, he accuses him of seeking only political freedom, and not a truly human emancipation⁵¹; but this is to misconstrue the republican option. Bauer too makes the distinction between political and social freedom fundamental to his own work, and envisages social and cultural change as aspects of historical transformation. A new subjectivity must accompany and undergird the new republican political institutions. This requirement emerges for Bauer from the duality of the historical process, the unity of concept and objectivity secured through permanent struggle and conscious return to self. In the reflexive remodelling of the subject as an agent of infinite self-consciousness, heteronomous characteristics may not be simply concealed from public inspection, but thoroughly eradicated. Bauer's republican rigorism does

⁴⁹ John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 179 ff.

⁵⁰ Bruce Ackerman, "Why Dialogue?" *Journal of Philosophy* 86 (1989), 5–22.

⁵¹ Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question," in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3 (New York: International Publishers, 1975), 146–74.

not admit that the criteria of legitimate external action may be less stringent than those governing inner ethical motivation, or that the juridical sphere can rightly have only the former in its purview. His doctrine of autonomy requires the harmonisation of inner and outer aspects of subjective behaviour.

IV. BAUER'S REPUBLICAN RIGORISM

Two texts, dating from October 1842 and early 1843, *Die Judenfrage* [*The Jewish Question*]⁵² and "Die Fähigkeit der heutigen Juden und Christen, frei zu werden" ["The Capacity of Present-Day Jews and Christians to Become Free"],⁵³ develop the antithesis between autonomy and heteronomy. While Bauer here highlights religious alienation, it is incorrect to conclude that he limits his account to this form of heteronomy.⁵⁴ These texts contain critical observations on the reign of private property and competition over civil society, comments elaborated in articles published under Bauer's editorship in *NDB* on free trade, monopoly, class conflict, and the exploitation of labour;⁵⁵ and since 1841 he had maintained that the liberation of the proletariat was the greatest challenge posed to the modern state.⁵⁶ In his assessment of the relation between religious alienation and progress, Bauer subjects to criticism all parties in the dispute about Jewish emancipation from legal restrictions in Prussia. He attacks the Restoration state for its defence of irrational privilege, and claims that it props up religion in order to maintain relations of subordination. He rebukes liberalism for its view of freedom as private interest.⁵⁷ He asserts that the Jewish religion is immutably opposed to change and progress, and that its practitioners claim freedom on the basis of their particular identity. He contends that the precondition for genuine political and social freedom is the renunciation of all particularistic ties with the past; thus, to be free, Jews must not merely seek to obtain political rights denied them in virtue of their religion, but they must repudiate

⁵² Bruno Bauer, *Die Judenfrage* (Braunschweig: Fr. Otto, 1843).

⁵³ Bruno Bauer, "Die Fähigkeit der heutigen Juden und Christen, frei zu werden," *Einundzwanzig Bogen aus der Schweiz*, ed. G. Herwegh (Zürich and Winterthur, Verlag des literarischen Comptoirs, 1843), 56–71; reprinted in Bruno Bauer, *Feldzüge der reinen Kritik*, ed. H.-M. Sass (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1968), 175–95.

⁵⁴ Zvi Rosen, *Bruno Bauer and Karl Marx* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1978), 85–108.

⁵⁵ See Moggach, *Bruno Bauer*, ch. 8.

⁵⁶ Bruno Bauer, "Der christliche Staat und unsere Zeit," *Hallische Jahrbücher für deutsche Wissenschaft und Kunst*, 7–12 June 1841, nos. 135–40; reprinted in B. Bauer, *Feldzüge*, 33.

⁵⁷ B. Bauer, *Judenfrage*, 72, 101–2.

their religious allegiance, as too must Christians. Bauer fuses exclusivity and egoism as principles of the old order, in opposition to universal self-consciousness, and depicts the attempt to uphold those principles unchanging as a blind assertion of positivity against the historical movement of emancipation.⁵⁸ Enriched by its Enlightenment and Hegelian ancestry, critical consciousness uncovers the historical basis of religion in particularity, egoism, and estrangement from universal human concerns and demonstrates the roots of religious alienation in the insufficiencies of existing forms of ethical life. Bauer sees in religion a mirroring of empirical contradictions.

Men have never yet done anything in history purely because of religion, undertaken no crusades, fought no wars. [Even] if they believed that they acted and suffered only to do God's will . . . it was always political interests, or their echoes, or their first stirrings, that determined and led mankind . . . Religious prejudice is the basis of social [*bürgerlichen*] and political prejudice, but the basis which this latter, even if unconsciously, has given itself. Social and political prejudice is the kernel which religion only encloses and protects . . . Religious prejudice is the reflection created by men themselves of the impotence, unfreedom, and constriction of their social and political life.⁵⁹

The scientific consciousness distinguishes, within religious attitudes, grades of historical evolution. As in his earlier work on the history of revelation,⁶⁰ Bauer claims that Judaism represents an elementary level of consciousness, that of the external relation of mankind and God, mediated though law or arbitrary will; only the one is free (though this One is transcendent), while the particular subjects are subordinate to irrational command. Christianity demonstrates a higher degree of consciousness, as in it all are free, and the externality of the deity is cancelled. But this is far from being a unilateral progress upon Judaism, because Christianity, especially Protestantism, universalises alienation in all aspects of social life. The superiority of Christianity consists only in its unendurable negativity, making requisite a transition to a new and higher form of *Sittlichkeit*.⁶¹ By thus exacerbating the contradiction between self-determination and self-abasement, Christianity clears the way for an epochal resolution. The essential political question raised by Jewish emancipation cannot be

⁵⁸ B. Bauer, *Judenfrage*, 19 ff, 62 ff.

⁵⁹ B. Bauer, *Judenfrage*, 94, 96, 97.

⁶⁰ Bruno Bauer, *Die Religion des Alten Testaments*, 2 vols. (Berlin: F. Dümmler, 1838).

⁶¹ B. Bauer, *Judenfrage*, 47; "Fähigkeit," 187–8 [in *Feldzüge*]. Cf. Bruno Bauer, *Posaune*, 150; and *Kritik der evangelischen Geschichte der Synoptiker und des Johannes, Dritter und letzter Band* (Braunschweig: Fr. Otto, 1842), 310.

resolved, for Bauer, by the integration into a more comprehensive whole of particulars who insist on their own particularity, or by a merely juridical approach to republicanism; the issue requires rather a change in character, or self-transcendence of the particulars themselves. The whole, too, takes on a new conformation, not as the sum of private interests, but as a conscious universal end. Only this, for Bauer, is the plan of the republic. Hence, he concludes, it is impossible to become a citizen of the republic while protecting a particularistic identity.

We witness here a slippage within Bauer's republican model, where the subjective and objective aspects come into tension. His treatment of the Jewish question stresses the subjective side of emancipation to the detriment of its objective conditions. The subjective unity of the free self, as a force for effective historical action, is overshadowed by another figure, emancipation achieved by the solitary efforts of the self-sufficient subject. It is now the adoption of the appropriate republican maxims that Bauer deems essential, and to this he is prepared to sacrifice concrete, objective advances in the scope and exercise of rights. Bauer here rejects juridical progress unless its moral basis is unequivocally autonomous. Citizenship and equality can be claimed only when all particular interest has first been sacrificed, when subjective freedom is already an inner reality. This stance exemplifies his republican rigorism at its most unbending.

Yet his own work suggests that there may be degrees of rigour compatible with republican emancipation. It is a question of balance of the two sides, subjective consciousness and objective institutions. Even if it is conceded that the citizens of the future republican community must be nonreligious in order to be fully autonomous, it is not necessary that these full conditions of emancipation be already met prior to creating the republican constitution. But Bauer's position on the Jewish question raises precisely this demand. Elsewhere, however, Bauer does admit a kind of distinction between right and morality, or a more gradualist approach to the attainment of full autonomy. In *Die gute Sache der Freiheit* [*The Good Cause of Freedom*] of 1842, he endorses one of the central demands of the republican movement, the separation of church and state. This demand was of particular significance against the regime of Friedrich Wilhelm IV, based on an alliance of conservative, pietist clergy and landed interests.⁶² As Bauer's friend Bettina von Arnim caustically

⁶² Erich Jordan, *Die Entstehung der konservativen Partei und die preussischen Agrarverhältnisse vor 1848* (München: Duncker und Humblot, 1914), 144.

observed, pietism had become the hidden drive-shaft of the state⁶³; and Bauer had himself examined the issue in his *Landeskirche*, and elsewhere. In *Die gute Sache*, he clearly demarcates a public from a private sphere. This demarcation is not a simple coexistence of spheres of equal value, but a hierarchical ordering, according priority to the public arena and to citizenship. In this version, the eradication of religion occurs in stages: First is its elimination from the public stage, marking the liberation of the state from ecclesiastical power, and from the defence of particular dogmas and the private interests that uphold them. The free state is the expression of universal human rights, to which religion is impervious.⁶⁴ As a result of its victory, the republic will relegate religion to a merely private status. But this is only a first step. Once religion has lost its public sanction and authority, and as the conditions of social life are increasingly humanised, the roots of religious alienation are attacked, and it withers away. Again, Bauer does not defend a narrow idea of political emancipation against a broader account of human freedom. He has such an account, but he does not yet make the elimination of religious heteronomy a precondition for progress towards the republic. It is rather the result of a historical development, once the republic has been won. As he puts it in 1842:

[Emancipated mankind] thus excludes religion, not in the way in which religion must exclude art and science, by trying to eliminate them root and branch. Rather, [free humanity] recognises [religion], and lets it exist as what it is, as a need of weakness, as a punishment for indeterminacy, as the consequence of cowardice – as a private affair. Art, state, and science will therefore still have to struggle against the incompleteness of their development, but their imperfection will not be elevated to a transcendent essence, which, as a heavenly, religious power, hems their further advancement. Their imperfections will be recognised as their own, and, as such, in the progress of history, they will be easily enough overcome.⁶⁵

His electoral addresses, delivered during the revolutionary tumult of 1848–9, are consistent with the attitude of *Die gute Sache*, in that Bauer, seeking to secure the terrain on which the struggle for the republic can be most effectively waged, offers a tactical alliance to liberals who are willing to defend the principle of popular sovereignty against the monarchy, even if their moral motivation is impure. The cement of this alliance is to be opposition to the monarchic-military counter-offensive, and a common

⁶³ Bettina von Arnim, letter to her son Ferdinand, October 27, 1841, cited in Barnikol ms., Bd. VIII, no. II, #11, p. 2.

⁶⁴ Bruno Bauer, *Die gute Sache*, 220.

⁶⁵ Bruno Bauer, *Die gute Sache*, 204–5.

front against socialism, which Bauer describes as an attempt to endow the existing state with greater regulatory powers, and not to dismantle it. This is still a version of republican rigorism, because it aims at the elimination of subjective as well as objective forms of heteronomy; but the approach to this end is more gradualist and pragmatic. It does not require that each objective step forward be preceded by absolute subjective clarity, nor that the reflexive return to unity in self-awareness be achieved before political institutions can be remodelled. It is rigorism in less rigorous form.

The themes of Bauer's 1829 prize manuscript on art have a surprising resonance for his *Vormärz* republicanism. There the questions of beauty, the beautiful self, and freedom were first posed. "The light of truth advances only by division and opposition and movement,"⁶⁶ thus by the exacerbation of contradictions, posing them without compromise or mediation so that they appear in their purity, and can thus be overcome. This truth is the unity of thought and being, not as a closed and completed identity, but as a process, in which, through subjective efforts, the concept of freedom breaks through into existence, and refashions objective relations. Bauer stresses the objectivity of thought, both in its comprehension of historically possible ends and in the need to realise these ends in political and social relations. "Thought conscious of itself cannot be limited to an internal sense, but is both in itself and in objectivity, and finds itself in its other."⁶⁷ In this relation to another, thought is infinite, as self-consciousness. Post-Enlightenment subjects enjoy a unique vantage point on history as a process of alienation and recovery of reason. The philosophy of Hegel evokes a new republicanism, richer and more universal than the old. Engagement with the inner limitations of the Hegelian system, as well as with its formidable strengths, opens the possibility of an ethical and aesthetic idealism, wherein subjects transcend their particular interests and identities to become bearers of universal interests. "Only as sublated do they truly exist."⁶⁸ But Bauer's work shows incompatible strains. His republican programme is one of full emancipation from all heteronomous forces, inner and outer, but it is inconsistent in its application, sometimes requiring that subjective emancipation be achieved before any objective juridical progress can occur, or independently of it. But thus the subjective concept of freedom is realised at the expense of the rational idea, the unity of concept and objectivity. In its

⁶⁶ Bruno Bauer, *Prinzipien des Schönen*, [68a].

⁶⁷ Bruno Bauer, *Prinzipien des Schönen*, [91a–b].

⁶⁸ Bruno Bauer, *Prinzipien des Schönen*, [106a].

subjective one-sidedness, Bauer's position here reverts to the "ought" that he elsewhere adamantly rejected. This most stringent demand is qualified by other elements in his work, which, with the same aim, allow for a different balance of subjective and objective aspects. Bauer's obstinate and faulty judgement on key concrete issues obscures his original contributions to a Hegelian republicanism in Germany.

Edgar Bauer and the Origins of the Theory of Terrorism

Eric v.d. Luft

Terrorism can be defined as the systematic belief in the political, religious, or ideological efficacy of producing fear by attacking or threatening to attack unsuspecting or defenseless populations, usually civilians, usually by surprise. Terrorist attacks are the desperate acts of those who feel themselves to be otherwise powerless. Terrorism is self-righteous, absolutist, and exclusivist. Its adherents are unwilling or unable to negotiate with their perceived enemies, or are prevented by political, social, or economic circumstances from doing so.

The terms “terrorism” and “terrorist” came into the language in the 1790s when British journalists, politicians, orators, and historians used them to describe the Jacobins and other particularly violent French revolutionaries. The terms have evolved since then and now typically refer to furtive acts by unknown underground perpetrators, not by heads of state or public figures such as Caligula, Ivan the Terrible, Maximilien Robespierre, or Joseph Stalin.

Terrorism as we now understand it was not possible until the invention of gunpowder and subsequent explosives and incendiaries. Before that, political assassinations, gigantic arsons, large-scale massacres, and other horrendously terrifying acts certainly occurred, but small cadres of insignificant citizens generally lacked the means to actualise sudden massive destruction by stealth. Roger Bacon’s invention of gunpowder in the thirteenth century and the introduction of firearms in Europe in the fourteenth enabled weaklings to outmatch and regularly defeat, for the first time in history, mighty warriors armed with sword or spear. Davids proliferated and all Goliaths became vulnerable. Feudal lords, their retainers, and other traditional authorities could no longer quite

so easily bully peasants and plebians into submission if agents or supporters of the mob could somehow acquire gunpowder. Modern terrorism, or terrorism properly so-called, began with the unrealised 5 November 1605 “Gunpowder Plot” of Guy Fawkes (1570–1606), who, had he lived in the twelfth century, could not have threatened king and parliament as he did in the seventeenth. But even with the ever-wider availability of explosives since Fawkes’s time, acts of terrorism remained rare until the middle of the nineteenth century, when anarchism arose as an ideological force.

The German 1840s resembled the American 1960s insofar as philosophy left the ivory tower and took to the streets as a countercultural phenomenon, established itself against the establishment, and preached multifaceted, self-contradictory revolution in underground pamphlets, popular tracts, and secret meetings. Nearly every strain of ideology that became important in the twentieth century was nascent in the writings of the so-called Young Hegelians, radical intellectuals who were influenced to various degrees by the dialectical logic of the dominant German philosopher of the first half of the nineteenth century, Hegel. It is not to Hegel’s credit that these partisans could ramify his allegedly self-unifying thought into so many disparate movements: socialism and communism from Karl Marx (1818–83) and Friedrich Engels (1820–95), socialism and Zionism from Moses Hess (1812–75), secular humanism from Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–72), the “higher criticism” of sacred texts from David Friedrich Strauss (1808–74) and Bruno Bauer (1809–82), dialectical historicism from August von Cieszkowski (1814–94), political liberalism from Arnold Ruge (1802–80), existentialism and anthropological materialism from Karl Schmidt (1819–64), individualistic anarchism from Max Stirner (1806–56), utopian anarchism from Mikhail Bakunin (1814–76), and raw anarchism and political terrorism from Edgar Bauer (1820–86).¹

Edgar² took twenty-four courses as a student at the University of Berlin from 1838 to 1842: four in history from Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886), four in Greek philology from August Boeckh (1785–1867), four in church history from Johann August Wilhelm Neander (1789–1850),

¹ The only biography of Edgar Bauer is Erik Gamby’s *Edgar Bauer. Junghegelianer, Publizist, und Polizeiaгент; mit Bibliographie der E. Bauer-Texte und Dokumentenanhang* (Trier: Karl-Marx-Haus, 1985). It does not exist in English. It lists several secondary books, mostly studies of Marx, Bruno Bauer, or the Young Hegelians, that provide biographical information about Edgar Bauer (p. 9, n. 1).

² For brevity’s sake, I shall henceforth refer to the Bauer brothers without surname.



H. v. d. Luft
 Light and dark
 Louis, August, and others
 Bruno, August, and others
 August, Bruno, and others

FIGURE 1

three in Biblical exegesis from his brother Bruno, two in philosophy from Georg Andreas Gabler (1786–1853), two in Latin literature from Karl Gottlob Zumpt (1792–1849), two in philosophy from Karl Werder (1806–93), one on Aristotle from Karl Ludwig Michelet (1801–93), one in philosophy from Adolf Trendelenburg (1802–72), and one in dogmatics from Philipp Konrad Marheineke (1780–1846). With his new friend Engels in 1842 he likely also heard the political scientist Leopold Dorotheus von Henning (1791–1866)³ and the philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775–1854).

In about 1839 Edgar joined a clique of radical Hegelians in the “Doktorklub” that met in the Café Stehely. Similar nests of young intellectual agitators multiplied in university towns throughout Germany in the late 1830s and early 1840s. When Bruno returned to Berlin in March 1842 after being fired for insubordination from his teaching position at

³ Henning translated Thomas Jefferson’s *Manual of Parliamentary Practice* as: *Handbuch des Parlamentarrechts* (Berlin: Dümmler, 1819).

the University of Bonn, he quickly became the focus of a new cluster of leftist revolutionaries, *Die Freien* ("The Free Ones").⁴ This group met mostly at Hippel's Tavern in Friedrichstrasse, sometimes at Walburg's in Poststrasse, and consisted of not only academics but also journalists, publicists, gymnasium teachers, and miscellaneous hangers-on. Engels' famous caricature of an argument among *Die Freien*,⁵ drawn probably in November 1842, depicts a shocked Ruge reacting to a belligerent Bruno trampling scattered pages of Marx's *Rheinische Zeitung für Politik, Handel, und Gewerbe* and other periodicals. Both are anxiously watched by the journalist Ludwig Buhl (1813–82) and the publicist Karl Ludwig Theodor Nauwerck (1810–91). The usual publisher of the Young Hegelians, Otto Wigand (1795–1870), looks away while Stürner aloofly smokes and Edgar pounds a table like an ape. The journalist Eduard Meyen (1812–70) and two unknowns fade into the background as Lieutenant Karl Friedrich Köppen (1808–63) slides drunk under Edgar's table. Their nemesis, Prussian Minister of Culture Johann Albrecht Friedrich Eichhorn (1779–1856), spies on them in the guise of a squirrel. A stylised guillotine hangs like the sword of Damocles above the Bauer brothers and Wigand. From this restless environment emerged Edgar's first publications: articles in Ruge's *Deutsche Jahrbücher für Wissenschaft und Kunst* and Marx's and Adolf Rutenberg's (1808–69) *Rheinische Zeitung*, as well as the first of his forty-four books and tracts⁶: *Bruno Bauer und seine Gegner* [*Bruno Bauer and His Enemies*] (Berlin: Jonas Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1842), a vigorous defense of his hounded brother and a call to total revolution.⁷

For a lark, Engels and Edgar collaborated on an autobiographical mock epic poem about *Die Freien* and published it anonymously.⁸ It

⁴ Cf. John Edward Toews, *Hegelianism: The Path Toward Dialectical Humanism, 1805–1841* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 288–326.

⁵ Figure 1 is frequently reprinted, for example, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Werke*, vol. 27 (Berlin: Dietz, 1963), facing p. 400; and in Gamby, between pp. 48 and 49.

⁶ Some published under his own name, some anonymously, and some pseudonymously as Martin Geismar or Martin von Geismar. They are listed alphabetically in the bibliography of this volume.

⁷ Hereafter abbreviated as *BB&SG*. For a chronological analysis of Bruno's radicalization, cf. Douglas Moggach, "Bruno Bauer's Political Critique, 1840–1841," *The Owl of Minerva*, 27, 2 (Spring 1996): 137–54. Cf. also Douglas Moggach, *The Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁸ *Die frech bedröute, jedoch wunderbar befreite Bibel; oder der Triumph des Glaubens, das ist, schreckliche, jedoch wahrhafte und erkleckliche Historia von dem weiland Licentiaten Bruno Bauer* (Neumünster bei Zürich: Hess, 1842).

contained these eight lines:⁹

Who's that, musclebound as a brewer, raging next to Engels?
That's bloodthirstiness itself, that's Edgar Bauer.
His brown face is framed in a sprouting beard;
He's young in years, old in cunning.
On the outside he's well dressed in blue, on the inside black and shaggy,
On the outside a man of fashion, on the inside a Sansculotte.
Oh see the wonder, see, he stomps his own shadow,
His wicked shadow, whom he's surnamed "Radge."¹⁰

Proudly and defiantly subversive toward nearly every institution and tradition, twenty-two-year-old Edgar depicted himself as determined to set the world on fire.

THE 1842 POLEMIC

The philosophical justification of terrorism began in 1842 with *BB&SG*. Earlier justifications of terrorism were only *ad hoc*, concentrating on particular events; but in a few sections of this book, especially the latter part of Chapter 6, "The Berlin Newspapers," Edgar became the first author to extend pro-terrorist arguments to a general theoretical basis.

The standard history of terrorism,¹¹ even though it locates the origin of political terrorist philosophy or ideology in the German *Vormärz*, does not mention Edgar but instead attributes the dawn of terrorist theory to Wilhelm Weitling (1808–71),¹² Karl Heinzen (1809–80),¹³ and Bakunin. Nevertheless, Edgar published his first terrorist diatribe earlier than any of these other three. Marx and Engels soon learned of Weitling, a tailor who became politically active in 1843. Bakunin met Edgar in Berlin in 1841, Ruge in Dresden later that year, and Weitling in Switzerland in 1843.

⁹ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Werke*, Ergänzungsband 2 (Berlin: Dietz, 1967), 300. Quoted by Gamby, *Edgar Bauer*, 18. This and all subsequent translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

¹⁰ Among Edgar's pseudonyms for his radical journal articles was the anagrammatic "Dr. Radge."

¹¹ Walter Laqueur, *A History of Terrorism* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 2002), 25–31, esp. 26. Cf. *Confronting Fear. A History of Terrorism*, ed. Isaac Cronin (New York: Thunder's Mouth, 2002), 8–9.

¹² Carl Frederick Wittke, *The Utopian Communist. A Biography of Wilhelm Weitling, Nineteenth-Century Reformer* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1950).

¹³ Carl Frederick Wittke, *Against the Current. The Life of Karl Heinzen (1809–80)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945).

It is unclear whether Heinzen was familiar with Edgar's work, but in any case, Heinzen wrote his own *locus classicus* of terrorist theory, his essay on murder, in 1848, six years after Edgar's first major work appeared on the subject.¹⁴

The existential situation of BB&SG was Edgar's disgust at the shabby treatment Bruno had recently received from Eichhorn, "Old Hegelians" like Marheineke, and the conservative or anti-Hegelian academic establishment. Reacting with uncontrolled verbal violence, as bitterly as Fedor Dostoevskii's underground man¹⁵ and several subsequent absurdist literary characters, Edgar insisted that radical subversion against the prevailing complacent, conformist, philistine order would, albeit sick, be healthier than that order itself. He was convinced that the self-satisfied needed to be shaken up, the smug needed to be toppled, and the oppressors needed to be thwarted. He drew no limits on his proposed insurgency. He argued that, according to Hegelian dialectical principles of history, the moment of revolt was already at hand. He shouted at his highly placed enemies: "What is our time? It is revolutionary. Fear it! You have been accustomed to it since childhood, with the word 'revolution' instantly bound to the mental image of a devil who, at the very least, comes dragging in the guillotine and all sorts of gruesome deeds."¹⁶

To threaten the conservative Prussian monarchy of Friedrich Wilhelm IV early in its reign with images of a recurrence of the French Revolution was dangerous and bold, but Edgar showed no restraint. Essentially a Rousseauian, Edgar saw the naturally free human spirit restricted and stifled by industrial society, whose bourgeois mentality tended toward exercising greater and greater economic and political control over its citizens, even while pretending to enfranchise them. Thus all modern government was his enemy: "Revolution now consists in the victory of the opposition over legitimacy. Revolution exterminates everything that wants to make man, this spirit-filled creature, into a spiritless, thought-fearing machine."¹⁷

¹⁴ Karl Heinzen, "Der Mord," in *Die Evolution*, ed. Johann Philip Becker (Biel [Switzerland]: January and February 1849).

¹⁵ Fedor Dostoevskii, *Notes from Underground*, trans. Michael R. Katz (New York: Norton, 1989). Cf., especially with regard to the underground man's critique of the Crystal Palace as the ultimate symbol of complacent, conformist, philistine, industrial society, Eric v.d. Luft and Douglas G. Stenberg, "Dostoevskii's Specific Influence on Nietzsche's Preface to *Daybreak*," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 52, 3 (July–September 1991): 441–61.

¹⁶ BB&SG, 5.

¹⁷ BB&SG, 8.

The driving force of the Bauer brothers' revolution was "critique," their thoroughgoing destructive intellectual analysis of anything and everything: "Critique thus stands against all tradition."¹⁸ The first target of critique was Christianity, then all religion; the Christian state, then all states. Critique emerged from the "higher criticism" of the Bible that Bruno preferred from the late 1830s until about 1841. Bruno undertook this project to help bolster the standard Hegelian philosophy of religion and liberal theology against the rationalised and romanticised piety of Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher. Bruno published major studies in this vein on the New Testament book of Revelation, John's Gospel, and the Synoptic Gospels from 1838 to 1841; but his radical conclusion that deception was inherent in these texts led him to write and publish anonymously the notorious *Trumpet of the Last Judgment Against Hegel the Atheist and Antichrist* in 1841.¹⁹ Of course Hegel was neither atheist nor antichrist, and Bruno probably knew that as well as anyone, but saw a way to use Hegel, or to skew the dialectic a bit to make provocative theological and political points. He vowed: "Philosophy intends revolution."²⁰

Bruno's thrust was the same in smaller works contemporary with *The Trumpet*. In "The Christian State and Our Time" (1841), Bruno outlined the political history of Christianity in relation to princely power and concluded that, as this dialectic culminates, "systematic knowledge will not be quiet"²¹ and eventually will, through critique, destroy the hegemony of the theological-political oligarchy and thus achieve the freedom of the spirit. Similarly, in "Instances of Theological Shamelessness" (1841), he wrote sarcastically that "we must consider the time of the 'good old faith' as frivolous, worldly, and cultured, if we compare this time with the completion of religiosity that has been achieved in our time" and that this obsolete faith "must be a pure, contentless, indeterminate struggle and must not by any means have anything to do with the determinacy of its enemy or especially with its actual ground and proofs. Every determinate content would be an enervating of faith and every actual struggle against critique and systematic knowledge a betrayal of faith."²² It

¹⁸ BB&SG, 10.

¹⁹ Bruno Bauer, *The Trumpet of the Last Judgement Against Hegel the Atheist and Antichrist. An Ultimatum*, trans. Lawrence Stepelevich (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen, 1989).

²⁰ Bruno Bauer, *Trumpet*, 206.

²¹ Bruno Bauer, "Der christliche Staat und unsere Zeit," *Hallische Jahrbücher für deutsche Wissenschaft und Kunst*, 7–12 June 1841, vol. 4, nos. 135–140, pp. 537–58; in: *Feldzüge der reinen Kritik*, Nachwort von Hans-Martin Sass (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1968), 41.

²² Bruno Bauer, "Theologische Schamlosigkeiten," *Deutsche Jahrbücher für Wissenschaft und Kunst*, 15–18 November 1841, vol. 4, nos. 117–20, pp. 465–79; in *Feldzüge*, 45.

was critique alone that enabled this “completion of religiosity.” Bruno thus juxtaposed himself against the old guard, which maintained that faith and its content must not be analyzed from without. Toews claims that early in 1841, Bruno had arrived at the stance of believing that if the Christian state ever recognised the rational legitimacy of the principle of critique, then it would *ipso facto* self-destruct.²³ This insight is likewise the theme of Barnikol’s analysis of Bruno’s attack on political Christianity.²⁴

Because Bauerian critique derived from Hegelian dialectic, it claimed for itself absolute and unimpeachable rationality. Because everything was subject to critique and because the intellectual or spiritual irresistibility of critique was sufficient to create momentum for positive change in the actual world, it naturally extended itself immediately from the realm of theological theory, textual analysis, and philosophical speculation to the realm of practical revolutionary politics. Its *theôria* was immediately equivalent to its *praxis*. Edgar took up the struggle: “Only an annihilating battle can bring this business [of political and religious oppression] to an end.”²⁵ Critique was its own army. Moreover, insofar as it was essentially destructive – that is, insofar as its analysis was deadly in a proto-Bergsonian sense – it was inexorable: “The principle [of critique] stomps along its way, which iron necessity itself dictates to it, crushing everything that refuses to join it unconditionally. The destruction it instigates is pitiless.”²⁶ The charges of historicism that are frequently brought against Hegel, either rightly or wrongly, can certainly without dissent be brought against the Bauer brothers, especially Edgar. Historicism is the belief that the facts of the past and their consequences in the present combine to create a force that must determine the future. Bauerian critique is such a force: “No external force can be important to this principle; no external law can hem it in.”²⁷

Assimilating Hegel’s fundamental concept of *Aufhebung* – that is, the dialectical process of simultaneously preserving something, canceling it, and raising it to a higher level – into his own thought, Edgar emphasised the second aspect, the canceling or destroying of existing dialectical phases: “Thus it is certain that every principle that newly steps into

²³ Toews, *Hegelianism*, 316.

²⁴ Ernst Barnikol, *Das entdeckte Christentum im Vormärz: Bruno Bauers Kampf gegen Religion und Christentum und Erstausgabe seiner Kampfschrift* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs, 1927).

²⁵ BB&SG, 106.

²⁶ BB&SG, 89–90.

²⁷ BB&SG, 90.

world history is *vandalistic*. And it is vandalistic because it must stride forward to its most extreme form.”²⁸ There is nothing un-Hegelian about this emphasis, but it is one-sided (*einseitig*) in the Hegelian sense. There is always negation, but there is not *only* negation. Edgar’s emphasis on destruction is analogous to considering the Hindu trinity of Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Shiva the Destroyer as if it were primarily Shiva, when in fact all three are equally important, just as all three aspects of *Aufhebung* are for Hegel equally important. When Hegel took over Spinoza’s insight that *determinatio* = *negatio*,²⁹ he did not focus on the negative but emphasised both determinacy (*Bestimmtheit*) and negation equally. Edgar was never so philosophically evenhanded: “Only [the modern] revolution brings nothingness, and that is its excellence, which its vandalism makes good again, or rather, makes complete.”³⁰ For Edgar, the destruction must be absolute. Upon the arrival of critique, it immediately assumes the character of political revolution: “Revolution is vandalistic because it can consider everything that humanity has experienced heretofore as not exactly structures of reason.”³¹

The culture of this revolution is starkly simple, patterned after the basest instincts of the French Revolution: “The new principle is Sansculottish. Truth is Sansculottish.”³² Identifying himself with the Sansculottes of the French Revolution meant for Edgar the abrogation of all restraint in political affairs. Any measure of violence or arrogance was permissible toward the goal of overthrowing the monarchy and establishing egalitarian anarchy, which he equated with true freedom. He felt that anyone side by side with him in struggle against the regime was *de facto* his brother: *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité!*

Edgar objected to authority, not to violence. Any authority, old or new, even an anti-authoritarian authority such as Robespierre in the latter stages of the French Reign of Terror, would further constrain the human spirit; but violence would release it. He saw his historicism as edifying: “. . . through the sublime concept of humanity, [truth] annihilates every difference; it ennobles and sanctifies the most humble. Only through this concept, under whose banner truth musters its champions, does it succeed in evoking, within this concept, the readiness for the greatest

²⁸ *BB&SG*, 89.

²⁹ Baruch Spinoza, Letter 50, to Jarig Jellis: “determinatio negatio est,” which Hegel misquotes in the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, § 91, Zusatz, as “omnis determinatio est negatio.”

³⁰ *BB&SG*, 91.

³¹ *BB&SG*, 92.

³² *BB&SG*, 92.

sacrifice, the most pitiless enthusiasm, and a fanaticism that shrinks away from nothing.”³³

Part of Edgar’s program was to gain freedom from positive religion. He regarded religious establishments as even more oppressive than monarchies, and more oppressive still when monarchy and doctrinal theology entered each other’s service to conspire against the people. Yet he noted that even the most oppressive regimes, either religious or political, originated from revolutions. He regretted that these revolutions went awry and engendered new, more severe oppressions. He argued that Christianity and Islam were each in their own time total revolutions that violently overthrew the previously prevailing cultures. He preached that now was the time for a new total revolution of humanity to overthrow in an equally or even more violent way both of these oppressive, mind-numbing religious cultures. This new revolution would not go awry or lose sight of its principles if it remained purely anarchistic throughout. Edgar used a false view of Islamic history to illustrate this point:

That Arabic conqueror commanded the Alexandrian Library to be burned,³⁴ because, to him, all learning, all ancient thought was nothing compared with the one, the Koran. He acted as every new principle acts if it wants to make its influence felt; he annihilated. And the principle shows all the more energy, proclaims so much more of its inner power, the more nearly total the annihilation that proceeds from it is.³⁵

But Amr ibn al-As did not think the idea of revolution through thoroughly: “He could watch calmly while the library burned because he already had in his pocket the Koran, a book which should have been as irksome as the rubbish of all ancient learning. His principle was selfish. He wanted only to substitute his own narrow dullness for another. He brought Islam.”³⁶ Islam means “submission,” which for Edgar meant voluntary self-enslavement to Allah and no kind of liberation at all. Edgar’s idea was that if the fire had brought only nothingness, it would have been acceptable. The Koran’s codification of rules, duties, abasements, and obligations achieved nothing but to deprive humans of their natural

³³ *BB&SG*, 93.

³⁴ Amr ibn al-As (594?–664), the Muslim conqueror of Egypt and the founder of Cairo in 641, was alleged probably no earlier than the twelfth century to have destroyed the great library of Alexandria in 642. Edgar apparently believed this legend. The library was partially destroyed by Caesar in 47 B.C.E., by Egyptian factions in their third-century civil war, and by Christians under Patriarch Theophilus about 391–2. It was most likely already gone by the time Amr appeared in Egypt.

³⁵ *BB&SG*, 89.

³⁶ *BB&SG*, 90.

freedom more efficiently than had the previous set of oppressors. His revolution would be innovative, secular, with no chance of imposing any such new restrictions on the human spirit: "And now the revolution of our time is almost infinitely different from the revolutions of all earlier times. That Arab annihilated [something], indeed, but he had already prepared the constraints which would hold for everything else that he demolished. He freed people from many chains, only to make the single chain that he chose for them so much tighter and heavier."³⁷

Edgar's diatribe was as much anti-Christian as anti-Islamic; in fact he saw the two as analogously and equally subversive of human freedom. Like Islam, Christianity emerged as a social revolution: "Christianity was also nothing but violent, annihilating struggle, which a new principle raised against the old world."³⁸ This new principle militated against the Caesars and the Herods, but it substituted something much worse, namely, the belief, written on each individual human heart,³⁹ that one's life was not one's own.⁴⁰ The Old Covenant enslaved self-conscious spirit from without, by the imposition of divine law; but the New Covenant was so much more powerful and insidious because it enslaved self-conscious spirit from within, by the imposition of guilt. "Thus Christianity destroyed [ancient Roman paganism], but not through the concept of a rational humanity did it demolish all its constraints."⁴¹ Rather, its concepts were the cult of Jesus, the threat of eternal damnation, the myth of the messiah, and the admonition to love one's neighbor as oneself. In creating all this, "Christianity also destroyed [something]. Indeed, the levelling toward which Christianity has struggled was almost as comprehensive as the equality which is the goal of the modern revolution."⁴² Christianity acquired and consolidated even more power to enslave the human spirit after the Constantinian revolution, the subsequent rise of the papacy, and the vassalage of medieval kings to the pope. Edgar was determined that nothing similar in history should ever recur: "The [modern] revolution does not want to bind humanity anew or to force upon it with violent authority a new rule, according to which humanity will therefore have to evolve. And [this] revolution cannot use that kind of force because it is neither an Islamic nor a Christian revolution, but a revolution of humanity."⁴³

³⁷ *BB&SG*, 90.

³⁸ *BB&SG*, 89.

³⁹ 2 Corinthians 3:2–3.

⁴⁰ 1 Corinthians 6:19.

⁴¹ *BB&SG*, 91.

⁴² *BB&SG*, 90.

⁴³ *BB&SG*, 92.

The French Revolution was the first step in Edgar's intended direction, but it did not go far enough. The Congress of Vienna, the Bourbon Restoration, the Carlsbad Decrees, and the Prussian monarchy were all ample evidence of its shortcomings. But like Marx and Engels six years later in the *Communist Manifesto*, Edgar believed that the established political system was about to crumble under its own weight: "The party [of progress] hardly needs to fight, since the opposing party, having found no rational support, is bereft of spirit. Moreover, as a lawless chaos constituted of selfishness, hatred, and prejudice, the opposition [to progress] must perforce collapse inward upon itself and thereby destroy itself."⁴⁴

THE MAN WHO PUNCHED KARL MARX

Edgar's quickly suppressed book, *Der Streit der Kritik mit Kirche und Staat* [*Critique's Quarrel with Church and State*] (Charlottenburg: Egbert Bauer, 1843; Bern: Jenni, 1844) was the world's first sustained theoretical defense of terrorist tactics to promote political and social goals.⁴⁵ It appeared on 7 August 1843, but that night the Berlin police confiscated what they believed was the entire edition. The Prussian supreme court indicted Edgar on 23 October for publishing a book without submitting it to the royal censor. His trial lasted from November 1843 to February 1844, and in September 1844 he was sentenced to three years of minimum-security confinement. Meanwhile Edgar had smuggled a single copy of *SKKS1* to Switzerland, where the radical publisher Friedrich Jenni promptly brought out the second edition. Copies surfaced in Berlin in mid-1844. Edgar was rearrested and retried, and in the spring of 1845 his sentence was extended to four years. He began serving his time at the fortress of Magdeburg on 9 May 1845.

Edgar returned to Berlin in April 1848 after Prussia declared a general amnesty for political prisoners on 18 March. He participated actively in the revolution and had to flee to Schleswig-Holstein in 1849. By 1851 Denmark had won him over to its cause in this region. Starting in 1852,

⁴⁴ BB&SG, 93.

⁴⁵ The book, its first edition, and its second edition are hereafter abbreviated as *SKKS*, *SKKS1*, and *SKKS2*, respectively. Together with *Pressprozess Edgar Bauers, über das von ihm verfasste Werk "Der Streit der Kritik mit Kirche und Staat"*. *Aktenstücke* (Bern: Jenni Sohn, 1844), his apology for *SKKS1* through May 1844, *SKKS2* was photoreprinted in Vaduz, Liechtenstein, by Topos Verlag in 1978. Neither 1844 book is translated into English, but two sections of *SKKS2*, "Die politische Revolution" (pp. 255–63) and "Die freie Gemeinschaft" (pp. 263–70), are translated by Eric v.d. Luft as "The Political Revolution" and "The Free Community" in *The Young Hegelians. An Anthology*, ed. Lawrence S. Stepelevich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 263–74.

the Danes employed him in London as a spy against leftist revolutionaries, including Marx.⁴⁶ By this time his friendship with Marx was quite strained, mainly as the result of Marx's attacks on Bruno, Marx's former teacher and close friend.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, Edgar and Marx remained frequent drinking buddies. Londoners in the Hampstead, Highgate, and Fitzrovia sections still recall a legendary "pub crawl" made by Edgar and Marx to at least seventeen businesses along Tottenham Court Road, an evening that ended with the pair's outrunning the bobbies who sought to arrest them for breaking streetlamps with paving stones. On 28 January 1861, German police, also spying in London, reported that when Marx and Edgar fell to insulting each other's wives during an argument about money, Edgar lost his temper and punched Marx in the face.⁴⁸ This incident destroyed Edgar's effectiveness in London, so thereafter the Danes used him to gather intelligence against politicians in Germany. Like Bruno, he gradually became more conservative, though he always remained an extremist in whatever cause he advocated. In the 1870s, he supported the Hannover nobility against the Hohenzollerns and thus forfeited any chance he may have had for rehabilitation in Prussia. He died in Hannover, impoverished and forgotten, but unrepentant.

Breckman sees the main thrust of Edgar's writings from 1842 to 1844 as consonant with those of Ruge, Marx, Meyen, and Rutenberg in their strident denunciations of liberalism, Protestantism, and republicanism.⁴⁹ Browning understands the Edgar of the same period as more closely allied with Stirner, Bruno, and Feuerbach, insofar as the "religion" of all four was fanatic devotion to the quest for freedom.⁵⁰ Mah takes Edgar, along with Ruge, Meyen, Buhl, Stirner, and Franz Zychlinski, known as "Szeliga" (1816–1900), to have rallied around the iconoclastic, atheistic, and newly unemployed Bruno in Berlin in 1842, investigating the dialectics of German society and analyzing the distribution of wealth and power while eschewing socialism and thus dissociating themselves from Marx.⁵¹ But

⁴⁶ Edgar Bauer, *Konfidentenberichte über die europäische Emigration in London 1852–1861*, ed. Erik Gamby, Margret Dietzen, and Elisabeth Neu (Trier: Karl-Marx-Haus, 1989).

⁴⁷ Zvi Rosen, *Bruno Bauer and Karl Marx. The Influence of Bruno Bauer on Marx's Thought* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1977), 127.

⁴⁸ Cited by Gamby, *Edgar Bauer*, 33.

⁴⁹ Warren Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory. Dethroning the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 254–5, 279, 283.

⁵⁰ Gary K. Browning, *Hegel and the History of Political Philosophy* (London: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 69–70.

⁵¹ Harold Mah, *The End of Philosophy, the Origin of "Ideology". Karl Marx and the Crisis of the Young Hegelians* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

the fact is that Edgar was really a man alone among the Young Hegelians, because only he advocated *unmitigated* violence in the service of political and social goals. Not even Bakunin yet came close to Edgar's fervor in this regard, but Edgar's fanatic prescriptions for violence may have influenced his Berlin acquaintance Bakunin, especially later through Ruge in Dresden and various political exiles in Switzerland.⁵² Bakunin's 1842 shibboleth, "The urge to destroy is also a creative urge," sounds very much like the Edgar of the same period.⁵³

Bakunin began studying Hegel in Russia in 1836, but his brief sojourn among the Young Hegelians dated either from early 1841, when he arrived at the University of Berlin, or from October 1841, when he met Ruge.⁵⁴ His first revolutionary publication appeared in October 1842 in Ruge's *Deutsche Jahrbücher*.⁵⁵ Bakunin abandoned both Dresden and Young Hegelianism in February 1843, lured by Georg Friedrich Herwegh (1817–75) and the "Young Germany" movement. Thus, according to Mendel, "Bakunin's Hegelian voyage ends in proclamations of apocalyptic violence."⁵⁶ Even though Bakunin seemed soon to distance himself from the violent revolutionary zeal of the Bauer brothers toward an ostensibly less violent utopian socialism, many of his later publications, notably *God and the State* (1871), echoed in many ways the Edgar of 1842–4.⁵⁷ Moreover, some interpreters argue that Bakunin did not change his views much at all after the early 1840s.⁵⁸ In 1869 he and Sergei Nechaev (1847–82) co-wrote *Catechism of a Revolutionist*,⁵⁹ in which they declared themselves "ruthless enemies of the civilised world," living for

⁵² Brian Morris, *Bakunin. The Philosophy of Freedom* (Montreal: Black Rose, 1993), attributes the beginning of Bakunin's revolutionary ideas to an 1843 meeting with Weitling and does not mention Edgar.

⁵³ Mikhail Bakunin, "Die Reaktion in Deutschland" [written under pseudonym Jules Elysard], *Deutsche Jahrbücher für Wissenschaft und Kunst*, 17–22 October 1842, vol. 5, nos. 247–51, pp. 985–1002; quoted in Aileen Kelly, *Mikhail Bakunin. A Study in the Psychology and Politics of Utopianism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982), 94. Cf. *Russian Philosophy*, ed. James M. Edie, James P. Scanlan, Mary-Barbara Zeldin, and George L. Kline (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1976), vol. 1, 385–406.

⁵⁴ Kelly, *Mikhail Bakunin*, 85–91, esp. 90.

⁵⁵ Max Nomad, *Apostles of Revolution* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1939), 149. Cf. note 53.

⁵⁶ Arthur P. Mendel, *Michael Bakunin. Roots of Apocalypse* (New York: Praeger, 1981), 86; cf. 160–75, 184.

⁵⁷ Mendel, *Michael Bakunin*, 372–3; but cf. Richard B. Saltman, *The Social and Political Thought of Michael Bakunin* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1983), which does not even mention either of the Bauer brothers.

⁵⁸ E.g., Kelly, *Mikhail Bakunin*, 257–88.

⁵⁹ Stephen T. Cochrane, *The Collaboration of Nečaeŭ, Ogarev, and Bakunin in 1869. Nečaeŭ's Early Years* (Giessen: Wilhelm Schmitz, 1977), 200–223.

“only one purpose: to destroy it.” Some of the recommendations in *Catechism* are more cruel and vicious than anything Edgar ever wrote, but such passages were probably the contribution of Nechaev, a ferocious, implacable, outrageous firebrand, a convicted murderer, and Dostoevskii’s model for the character Pyotr Verkhovensky in *The Possessed* (1871). In *God and the State*, Bakunin preached social revolution against religion, and his analysis of the political dimension of religion there derived apparently first from Edgar, then from Pierre Joseph Proudhon (1809–65) and Charles Darwin (1809–82), and ultimately from Voltaire, but contained no explicit call to armed uprising.

HEGEL’S ANALYSIS

Jean-Jacques Rousseau naïvely assumed that once the people arose to throw off the oppressive yoke of government, then they would thereafter have no choice but to realise their own natural freedom, and essentially to live happily ever after.⁶⁰ He did not anticipate the emergence of anyone like Robespierre, who believed it his revolutionary duty to compel citizens to be free.⁶¹ Rousseau’s benign anarchism could not account for the economic desperation of the Sansculottes, the fanaticism of the Jacobins, or the eventual necessity of a Napoleon to restore order. For Hegel, on the other hand, who had the advantage of living after the fact, the absolute freedom of anarchy led ineluctably to terror. In his insightful probe of Rousseauian interpretations of the French Revolution, Hegel described the flight from government into anarchy as the human spirit’s becoming conscious of itself as “pure personality” and thus knowing itself as participating in “the whole of spiritual reality,” so that “its reality, all reality, is entirely spiritual, and its world is no more than, for spirit, its own will, i.e., the general will.”⁶² Hegel correctly saw Rousseau’s general will as a will-o’-the-wisp. The practical unity of spirit, prerequisite for the general will to function, did not exist, for spirit was dissipated among the many

⁶⁰ Peter Calvert, “Terror in the Theory of Revolution,” in: *Terrorism, Ideology, and Revolution*, ed. Noel O’Sullivan (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1986), 29.

⁶¹ Calvert, “Terror,” 28.

⁶² G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, sixth edition, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Meiner, 1952), 415. My paraphrase: “Es ist seiner reinen Persönlichkeit und darin aller geistigen Realität bewusst, und alle Realität ist nur Geistiges; die Welt ist ihm schlechthin sein Wille, und dieser ist allgemeiner Wille.” Cf. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), ¶ 584, pp. 356–7.

subjective personalities of the revolution, each with its own particular agenda, each believing its own individual will to be universal:

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned.⁶³

In Robespierre's political cosmology, spirit was not tied to anything, had no substance, and had become vacuous, a mere semblance of its true concept (*Begriff*): "The *otherworldliness* of this actuality of consciousness and will hovers over the corpse of the vanished independence of real or believed being as nothing but the emission of a stale gas, the inane Supreme Being."⁶⁴

The dialectic of utility (*Nützlichkeit*)⁶⁵ that precedes and partially overlaps Hegel's section on "Absolute Freedom and Terror"⁶⁶ in the *Phänomenologie of Spirit* is instructive. For Hegel, utility emerged through Jeremy Bentham as the practical climax of the Enlightenment, reviving spirit from its abstract listlessness and giving it a sense of social purpose.⁶⁷ This listlessness had been prompted by the dissipation of spirit in the wake of Cartesian dualism, the metaphysical bifurcation of thought and body, the denial of the traditional Platonic identity of pure thought and pure being.⁶⁸ René Descartes and his successors had misdirected philosophy away from its true goal of providing ultimate rationale for cohesive social morality (*Sittlichkeit*). Instead they wrought the abstract cosmological debates of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that culminated in the politically impotent school metaphysics of Gottfried Wilhelm Freiherr von Leibniz and Christian von Wolff.

The eighteenth-century materialism of the *philosophes*, physiocrats, and mercantilists was for Hegel a dead end, a set of circumstances in which the sensuous and the absolute were regarded as "positively related"⁶⁹ to each other's intrinsic nature and wherein the absolute actually cherished the sensuous, at the cost of social progress. Thus the dialectic demanded a rebirth of social consciousness, not just in the abstract form of Rousseau,

⁶³ William Butler Yeats, "The Second Coming," lines 3–6.

⁶⁴ Hegel, *Phänomenologie* (ed. Hoffmeister), 416; cf. Miller, ¶ 586, p. 358.

⁶⁵ Hegel, *Phänomenologie* (ed. Hoffmeister), 395–6, 398–400, 404–8, 409–16, 551; Miller, ¶¶ 556, 559–61, 570–4, 578–86, 791; pp. 339–40, 341–3, 347–50, 351–8, 481.

⁶⁶ Hegel, *Phänomenologie* (ed. Hoffmeister), 414–22; Miller, ¶¶ 582–95, pp. 355–63.

⁶⁷ Hegel, *Phänomenologie* (ed. Hoffmeister), 396; Miller, ¶ 556, p. 339.

⁶⁸ Hegel, *Phänomenologie* (ed. Hoffmeister), 407–11; Miller, ¶¶ 574–9, pp. 349–53.

⁶⁹ Hegel, *Phänomenologie* (ed. Hoffmeister), 398; Miller, ¶ 559, p. 341.

but in a concrete and practical consciousness of social utility, chiefly in the person of Bentham, that perforce arose like a phoenix from the ashes of merely commercial utility and the centralised economy of the *ancien régime*.

Lauer asserts that Hegel's transition from Enlightenment utility to the Terror "is not thoroughly clear."⁷⁰ On this point he is typical of commentators on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Loewenberg's characters, Hardith and Meredy, in uncharacteristic agreement, claim that Hegel forces the argument to move from an Enlightenment mentality, in which revolution does not necessarily "lie dormant," to revolutionary fervor.⁷¹ For Hyppolite, on the other hand, this transition seems quite clear. The truth of the Enlightenment in general, and of Enlightenment utility in particular, is freedom. Thus it seems perfectly natural to Hyppolite that Hegel should push this new concept of freedom to its limit in this part of the dialectic.⁷²

Hegel's dialectic of utility occurs in the context of his discussion of the Enlightenment tension between reason and faith. The Enlightenment, being the study of things and facts in a worldly or natural scientific way, unsurprisingly soon arrives at considering the relative usefulness of things and facts in various worldly contexts. This new emphasis on practical utility is manifest not only in technology (e.g., James Watt) or economics (e.g., Adam Smith) but also in political and social theory (e.g., Bentham). As all the useful things and facts in the world are related – at least instrumentally – to one another, so they are also each related to the absolute.⁷³ Because the absolute lacks nothing, it stands to reason that these practically interrelated things and facts also include the things and facts of religion, theology, and faith. Hegel asserted that this latter set of things and facts is the most useful of all, because it is useful toward one's eternal spiritual health. Thus, for Hegel, the spirituality of faith, paradoxically, is supported in a consummately nonspiritual, instrumental, or even uncouth way by the Enlightenment's one-sidedly intellectual approach to God, freedom, and immortality. Faith is appalled by its treatment at the hands of the Enlightenment,⁷⁴ as transcendence melts into

⁷⁰ Quentin Lauer, *A Reading of Hegel's "Phenomenology of Spirit"* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982), 211.

⁷¹ Jacob Loewenberg, *Hegel's "Phenomenology": Dialogues on the Life of Mind* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1965), 249–50.

⁷² Jean Hyppolite, *Genèse et structure de la "Phénoménologie de l'esprit" de Hegel* (Paris: Éditions Montaigne, 1946), vol. 2, 439.

⁷³ Hegel, *Phänomenologie* (ed. Hoffmeister), 400; Miller, ¶ 561, p. 343.

⁷⁴ Hegel, *Phänomenologie* (ed. Hoffmeister), 400; Miller, ¶ 562, p. 343.

deism, immanence into clockwork, and human spirituality into rational animality. Faith does not believe that Kantian reason will ever step aside in order to make room for faith.⁷⁵

All possible relationships between faith and reason resolve into a four-fold schema: Either (1) reason is primary and excludes faith, (2) reason is primary and includes faith, (3) faith is primary and includes reason, or (4) faith is primary and excludes reason.⁷⁶ The first and fourth are one-sided, extremist points of view. The first includes the atheism of Bertrand Russell and Rudolf Carnap, the geometrical rationalism of Spinoza, the evidentialism of W. K. Clifford, the skepticism of David Hume, and the one-sided scientism of typical Enlightenment thinkers; while the fourth includes the theocratic despotism of John Calvin, John Knox, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, and the Taliban, the fideism of Tertullian, and the faith-centered thought of Martin Luther, Blaise Pascal, Søren Kierkegaard, and Karl Barth. The second and third are moderate, mediated positions. In many ways they are just two sides of the same coin, because they both promote the cooperation of reason and faith. Among the adherents of the second are Plato, Aristotle, Philo Judaeus, Plotinus, John Scotus Erigena, Descartes, Leibniz, Hegel, and Alfred North Whitehead; while in support of the third are such mainstream Christian philosophical theologians as Augustine, Anselm, Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas, Schleiermacher, and Paul Tillich. Immanuel Kant lies problematically between the first and second.

Hegel argued in the utility dialectic that the Enlightenment's focus on "pure insight" constituted advocacy of a reason that does not include faith. When reason lacks the mediating influence or humanizing counsel of deep faith, it becomes arrogant, self-righteously instrumental, and utterly convinced of its own superiority in all affairs. Some of the major Enlightenment thinkers, such as Kant, realised that reason should respect faith, but the general trend of the Enlightenment was toward deism.

For Hegel a philosophically theistic religion was a necessary component of the whole human being. The right of pre-Enlightenment faith and spirituality against Enlightenment reason and utility was a divine right,

⁷⁵ Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, second edition, preface, B xxx.

⁷⁶ This fourfold schema was originated by John A. Hutchison in *Faith, Reason, and Existence. An Introduction to Contemporary Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Oxford, 1956), 93–104, esp. 97–9. I typically refer to the version I use as the "Hutchison-Geoghegan schema," because I first learned of it in an undergraduate religion course given at Bowdoin College in the early 1970s by Professor William D. Geoghegan, who slightly modified Hutchison's formulation.

whereas the converse right of Enlightenment reason and utility against faith and spirituality was only a human right.⁷⁷ Utility was a direct product of the aspect of the Enlightenment that Hegel sharply criticised for its prejudicial assessment of religious faith as superstition.⁷⁸ He recognised that the Enlightenment was partially correct to label faith as superstition, but attacked the Enlightenment for failing to apprehend the more profound aspects of faith – that is, those aspects that make human beings truly human. He criticised the Enlightenment for allowing reason to lord it over faith, for in so doing reason showed itself to be false to its own mission to be all-inclusive and supremely edifying. By demeaning and caricaturing faith and not apprehending faith in its full depth, Enlightenment reason thus doomed to failure its utilitarian project for social and political amelioration.

For Hegel, as for most religious thinkers, true religion is a shared activity that creates harmony, unity, and peace among families, friends, neighbors, and even strangers. Venerated objects can sometimes be the focus or impetus of such devotion. He reproached the Enlightenment for not seeing the spiritual character of objects.⁷⁹ If faith is primary and includes reason or if, as Whitehead claimed in *Religion in the Making*, religion is what one does with one's own solitariness, then Hegel would still be correct about that, but it would be difficult to accept Hegel's ¶ 549 critique of the Enlightenment view of religion when we notice not only the devotion of Christians to the relics of saints, Jews to the Wailing Wall, and Muslims to the Kaaba but also, and especially, the continued prevalence of anthropomorphic conceptions of God. Faithful people frequently and mistakenly put their spiritual trust in "dead," nonspiritual things,⁸⁰ which are more properly the province of one-sided, analytical, Enlightenment reason. But because, for Hegel, reason is primary and includes faith, an object can easily be at the same time an object of science and an object of devotion without either prospect's being compromised.

Hegel is abundantly clear throughout his entire corpus that reason can never be genuinely rational, fully mediated, or true to itself unless it includes faith in all its depth. Faith and reason are each so important to the wellness and wholeness of the entire human being that, at least in Hegel's view, neither of them ought ever to be either shortchanged

⁷⁷ Hegel, *Phänomenologie* (ed. Hoffmeister), 400; Miller, ¶ 563, p. 343.

⁷⁸ Hegel, *Phänomenologie* (ed. Hoffmeister), 383–413; Miller, ¶¶ 538–81, pp. 328–55.

⁷⁹ Hegel, *Phänomenologie* (ed. Hoffmeister), 390–1; Miller, ¶ 549, pp. 334–5.

⁸⁰ Hegel, *Phänomenologie* (ed. Hoffmeister), 164, 488; Miller, ¶¶ 217, 696, pp. 131–2, 423.

or placed outside a context of full mutual respect. His clearest and most succinct statement of this anti-Enlightenment attitude is in the first three paragraphs of his Foreword to his student Hinrichs's *Religion in its Internal Relationship to Systematic Knowledge* (1822):

For that opposition is of such a nature that the human spirit can turn away from neither of its two aspects; each shows itself rather to be rooted in spirit's innermost self-consciousness, so that, if they are conceived to be in conflict, the stability of spirit is shaken and its condition is one of the most unfortunate bifurcation. . . . if the deepest genuine needs were not satisfied in the reconciliation, if the sanctuary of the spirit were not to obtain its right, then the bifurcation in itself would remain, and the enmity would fester all the more deeply within; the harm, itself not acknowledged and not cognized, would only be all the more dangerous.⁸¹

Hegel's charges against Enlightenment reason *vis-à-vis* pre-Enlightenment faith would equally apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to the Bauer brothers' critique of religion. Utility, consistent with deism in denying the immanence of God in human affairs, secularises the world of faith and is fundamentally godless.⁸² It calculates; it does not meditate.⁸³ Humans for it become things, not souls. Insofar as it regards individual human beings as only factors in various calculations, and concomitantly or proportionately has no respect for the sanctity of individual human lives, it naturally culminates in terror. Starting with the best of intentions for the greatest benefit for the greatest number, its means of achieving this goal take it to the standpoint of depraved indifference to human life. Love and all the other higher human feelings are expected to die for the sake of social and political amelioration.

Kainz argues that for Hegel the concept of utility is the culmination or truth of the Enlightenment and the reason for the victory of Enlightenment reason over religion.⁸⁴ But it is a Pyrrhic victory because the impetus given to free thought by its successful challenge of traditional theology and religious absolutes led it, via its new belief in absolute freedom, to the soulless excesses of the Reign of Terror and the vacuity of Robespierre's ersatz religion.

⁸¹ Hermann F. W. Hinrichs, *Die Religion im inneren Verhältnisse zur Wissenschaft*, trans. Eric v.d. Luft in *Hegel, Hinrichs, and Schleiermacher on Feeling and Reason in Religion: The Texts of Their 1821–22 Debate* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen, 1987), 245.

⁸² Hegel, *Phänomenologie* (ed. Hoffmeister), 411–13; Miller, 11, 580–1, pp. 353–5.

⁸³ Cf. Martin Heidegger's famous terminology, the juxtaposition of *rechnendes Denken* ("calculative thought") and *besinnliches Denken* ("meditative thought").

⁸⁴ Howard Kainz, "Hegel's Critique of Eighteenth Century Utilitarianism in His *Phenomenology*," *International Journal of Moral and Social Studies* 8, 2 (Summer 1993): 135–41.

Christensen detects in Hegel's whole dialectic an intermediate and essentially negative phase that he calls "the religion of utility."⁸⁵ The German is *Zweckmässigkeit* (expediency),⁸⁶ not *Nützlichkeit* (utility); thus the salient feature of this religion is not to be confused with the idea of utility that Hegel presents in the *Phenomenology*. Yet they are related, not inconsequentially. Christensen argues that this religion is not authentic because it is secular and political and thus not adequately integrated with the whole human spirit. So far so good, but Hegel goes further, as can be seen in the Jaeschke/Hodgson texts of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* that were not available to Christensen. Hegel in his lecture manuscript identified the religion of expediency – that is, the Roman religion – with a product of the understanding (*Verstand*)⁸⁷ and thus implicitly contrasted it with any religion that would be a natural or dialectical outgrowth of overarching reason (*Vernunft*). Religions of the understanding, characterised by the particularistic "legal status" (*Rechtszustand*) of the Roman realm, are at best capable of a Kantian ethics of the discrete individual (*Moralität*), while only religions of synthetic reason can support or engender cohesive social morality (*Sittlichkeit*).⁸⁸ Similarly, Enlightenment utility can regard human individuals only as free particulars, and thus can never create social cohesion or an ethical order of life. The best it can hope for is to give each citizen full legal rights. *Sittlichkeit* can be achieved only after the human spirit has experienced the nadir of the Terror, internalised it, and proceeded beyond it.

The usual interpretation of Hegel's social and political thought is that the individual is adrift when living outside the context of the well-ordered social, political, and economic environment. For example, Franco emphasises that for Hegel the absolutely free self-consciousness would perforce be politically naïve and ineffectual because it would be lost, without a point of orientation, frame of reference, or any concrete

⁸⁵ Darrel E. Christensen, "The Religion of Vision. A Proposed Substitution for Hegel's 'Unauthentic' Religion of Utility," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 1 (1970): 147–60.

⁸⁶ G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion, Teil 2. Die Bestimmte Religion*, ed. Walter Jaeschke (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1985), vol. 2a, 96–137, 397–410, 579–91; *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, Volume II. Determinate Religion*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, trans. Robert F. Brown, Peter C. Hodgson, J. Michael Stewart, and Henry S. Harris (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 190–231, 498–512, 687–99.

⁸⁷ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 96; Hodgson, 190.

⁸⁸ Cf. the analysis of the Roman realm in Eric v.d. Luft, "The Theological Significance of Hegel's Four World-Historical Realms," *Auslegung* 11, 1 (Fall 1984): 340–57.

way to feel at home in the world of objective spirit.⁸⁹ Walton, analyzing Hegel's criticism of utilitarianism in the "Civil Society" sections of the *Philosophy of Right* and the "Objective Spirit" sections of the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, likewise interprets Hegel as saying that we are "essentially social beings and . . . only develop fully when . . . in communities which are characterised by norms and values which adequately embody that social being."⁹⁰ The ultimate thisworldly foundation of the state is the "economic rationality" embodied in civil society, which, as Walton observes, is "dependent upon the clarification of the norms and values of ethical life. A coherent ethical life is thus a condition of economic rationality."⁹¹ In other words, for Hegel there can be no prosperity without *Sittlichkeit*. The individual must deeply experience secure social coherence and a sense of belonging and participating in the life of the family, civil society, and the state. Of course, such integration would involve a proportionate loss of the individual's pure or abstract freedom, which in Hegel's view would be an advantageous exchange for the citizen's real or concrete freedom in the state, the well-ordered society of the actual world. But Edgar would have none of that. For him the very existence of the state, even an ideal Hegelian state, was tantamount to the oppression of each individual and the denial of personal freedom. There is no *Sittlichkeit* in Edgar's worldview, and in that he is quintessentially anti-Hegelian.

For Edgar, Hegel's utility took on the aspect of necessity. It was for him, consistent with his usual historicism, a transitional phase from Enlightenment reason to the greatest product of the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, especially the absolute freedom of the Sansculottes from the September 1792 massacres until the death of Robespierre on 28 July 1794. Edgar saw Enlightenment reason as the natural precursor of Bauerian critique. Both alike embodied the historical forces that would eventually unleash revolutionary violence. Edgar and Hegel agreed that once a *Zeitgeist* of calculative utility was established with the freedom of each individual as its goal, then terror must be the ultimate result of the *Zeitgeist*. But where Hegel decried the terror, Edgar applauded it.

⁸⁹ Paul Franco, *Hegel's Philosophy of Freedom* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999), 109–13.

⁹⁰ A. S. Walton, "Economy, Utility, and Community in Hegel's Theory of Civil Society," in *The State and Civil Society. Studies in Hegel's Political Philosophy*, ed. Zbigniew A. Pelczynski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 244–61; here 250.

⁹¹ Walton, "Economy, Utility, and Community," 250.

Hegel would have placed Edgar, not in the “Enlightenment Utility Absolute Freedom Terror” section of the *Phenomenology*, but earlier, in the negative phase of the “Actualization of Rational Self-Consciousness Through Itself” chapter – that is, “The Law of the Heart and the Madness of Self-Conceit.” He would not have considered Edgar’s peculiar arrogance (*Eigendünkel*) rational, but only a necessary step on the way to a fully mediated political, social, and cultural rationality (*Sittlichkeit*). For Hegel, Edgar’s place in the development of self-conscious objective spirit would be analogous to that of Robespierre, without *l’être suprême*.⁹²

THE 1843–4 POLEMIC

SKKS can be read as a bridge between the abstract revolutionary political theory of Bruno and Ruge and the practical anarchic action endorsed by Proudhon and Stirner. The explicit political goal of *SKKS* is the achievement of human freedom, but for Edgar the only worthwhile freedom is complete or absolute freedom. The very existence of any state is incompatible with such freedom, and thus with the human spirit in general. *SKKS* is completely consistent with *BB&SG*.

SKKS2 was published without a table of contents.⁹³ Supplying it in English here shows clearly the standard Hegelian triadic structure of Edgar’s argument, as well as how frequently and casually he violated this structure:

[Introduction]. p. [3].

[Part I]. Critique. p. [13].

Chapter 1. Critique. p. [15].

§ 1. Our Time, The People. p. [15].

§ 2. Critique and the Religious Consciousness. p. 20.

§ 3. Christian and Protestant. p. 29.

§ 4. The Theological Consciousness. p. 33.

Chapter 2. Presentation of Bruno Bauer’s Critique. p. [38].

§ 1. The Inner Development of This Critique. p. [38].

§ 2. The Result of Bauer’s Critique. p. 42.

§ 3. Christianity. p. 52.

§ 4. The Importance of Critique. p. 56.

⁹² Cf. Hegel, *Phänomenologie* (ed. Hoffmeister), 416; Miller, ¶ 586, p. 358.

⁹³ I have never been able to examine a copy of *SKKS1*.

Chapter 3. How We Have Thus Proceeded Against Critique? p. [59].

§ 1. The State. p. [59].

§ 2. The Universities. p. 62.

§ 3. Public Opinion. p. 68.

[Part II]. The Religious and Bourgeois Consciousness. p. [71].

Chapter 1. Theological Public Opinion. p. [73].

§ 1. Attempt at Mediation. p. [73].

§ 2. Ch[ristian] Herrmann Weisse. p. 90.

§ 3. Herr Dr. O[tto] F[riedrich] Gruppe.⁹⁴ p. 99.

Chapter 2. The Theological Faculties and the Universities. p. [138].

§ 1. The Bishopric of the Faculties. p. [138].

§ 2. The Faculty's Judgment. p. 141.

§ 3. The Universities. p. 155.

Chapter 3. The Christian Church. p. [164].

Chapter 4. The Christian State. p. [171].

I. The Christian State and the Vassal. p. 187

[§ 1]. The Geniality and Humility of the Bourgeois. p. 189.

[§ 2]. Law and Right. p. 204.

[§ 3]. Bureaucracy and Secrecy. p. 212.

[§ 4]. Censorship, "Academic Freedom." p. 216.

[§ 5]. The School and the Church. p. 224.

II. The Theological Regime. p. 237.

III. The Christian State and the Free Human Being. p. 244.

[§ 1]. Public Opinion. p. 245.

[§ 2]. Propertylessness and the Mastery of Circumstances. p. 248.

[§ 3]. The Political Revolution. p. 255.

[§ 4]. The Free Community. p. 263.

[Part III]. Peace, p. [271].

Edgar began *SKKS* by telling his readers that they had "bizarre mental images of the human spirit"⁹⁵ and encouraging them to refine these images to embrace concepts of reason and freedom: "The human is a free being. Human and free, freedom and humanity, are for us one and the same. The human is a rational being. Human and rational, reason and

⁹⁴ The Cambridge 1983 translation of § II.4.III.4. of *SKKS2* failed to recognise the existence of Otto Friedrich Gruppe (1804–76), mistranslating "Wisst ihr wohl, dass ihr es wie der Dr. Gruppe macht, welcher glaubt..." as "Do you know that you are like a group of Ph.D.s who believe..." instead of as "Do you know that you are like Dr. Gruppe, who believes..."

⁹⁵ *SKKS2*, 3.

humanity, are for us one and the same.”⁹⁶ This quintessentially Hegelian view of humanity pervades *SKKS*. Edgar reflected the revolutionary development of the human spirit in the book’s three major divisions. Critique, the higher consciousness of spirit, is the Hegelian proposition (Part I). Its internal and natural opposition is the common consciousness of spirit (Part II). Through the interaction of these two intimately related modes of consciousness, critique is preserved, canceled, and raised to a higher level, the practical level of peace (Part III), which can be achieved only through revolution led by critique and elevating the common consciousness to the level of critique’s cultural foot soldiers, so to speak.⁹⁷

Insofar as “critique’s opposition is the religious consciousness”⁹⁸ – that is, insofar as fideism and orthodoxy are the natural enemies of the reason that sits in judgment of all things – *SKKS* reads like a sequel to *BB&SG*. Edgar spent the bulk of *SKKS* attacking the Roman Catholic hierarchy, the Lutheran clergy, Reformation mentality, professional theologians, and the gullibility of everyday believers. His focus, as usual, was on the oppressive and seductive character of Christianity. He saw the Christian church as just another set of political institutions, ripe to be overthrown: “I call ‘religious’ this flabby, intellectually lazy, despondent, unfree consciousness of your political circumstances. The religious consciousness knows nothing at all about the human being as a free, self-determining power.”⁹⁹ The anti-Christian diatribe in *SKKS* depends on and continues the quasi-historical analysis of the revolutionary origins of Christianity that Edgar developed in *BB&SG*,¹⁰⁰ emphasizing how Christianity transformed self-conscious spirit from a naturally free Rousseauian entity into a servile, unfree, self-negating shadow of its truth. The community of Christian believers displayed geographical breadth and temporal length, but not spiritual depth: “Christianity was nothing but a monstrous upheaval that arose in human hearts, an upheaval which, insofar as all revolutions

⁹⁶ *SKKS*2, 19; Edgar’s emphasis removed in translation.

⁹⁷ The Hegelian “proposition” (*Satz*), “opposition” (*Gegensatz*), and “proposition preserved, cancelled, and raised to a higher level” (*aufgehobener Satz*) are commonly but crudely referred to as “thesis,” “antithesis,” and “synthesis.” The difference is that the crude terminology implies that a coalescence emerges from the conflict of two externally related states of affairs, equal and separate, like the Manichean good and evil or the Zoroastrian Ahura Mazda and Ahriman, while the more accurate English terminology conveys that an improved proposition evolves from the original proposition’s resolution of its discovered and unavoidable internal contradictions.

⁹⁸ *SKKS*2, 20.

⁹⁹ *SKKS*2, 21.

¹⁰⁰ For example, the argument of *SKKS*2, 83–5, is a reprise and rewrite of *BB&SG*, 89–92.

have kindled themselves in the spirits of the humble, produced an ever wider community of new believers and extended across the entire old world.”¹⁰¹ The revolution Edgar wanted would become possible only in a post-Christian world.

One section of *SKKS*, § II.4.III.3., “The Political Revolution,” which is mainly an interpretation of the French Revolutionary events of 1793, could have been titled “The First Principles of Terrorism.” It shows Edgar at his most vehement and least restrained. It reveals Edgar’s philosophy of freedom, derived from and illustrated by his analysis of the Reign of Terror, the fall of Robespierre, and the rise of Napoleon,¹⁰² as entirely different from Hegel’s. While Hegel was a liberal constitutional monarchist, for Edgar it was a crime to be a king in a free state – that is, a capital crime for which summary execution would always be justified.¹⁰³ Here Edgar belabored the point that freedom for the individual would always be impossible within the context of any state: “The very word, ‘freedom’, is repugnant to the state – so history will teach.”¹⁰⁴ In his juxtaposition of the state and freedom, he praised the bare fact that some degree of anarchy had manifested itself in the French Revolution and praised Robespierre for bringing that anarchy. Robespierre’s big mistake, according to Edgar, was believing that the goal of freedom could be realised within some conceivable state.¹⁰⁵

Henry Kissinger is supposed to have asked Mao Zedong to assess the impact of the French Revolution, to which Mao is supposed to have replied, “It’s too early to tell.” Mao’s circumspection was not mirrored in the twenty-three-year-old Edgar, who thought he had the French Revolution all figured out. Indeed, the political philosophy of most of the Young Hegelians was rooted in their extensive, almost obsessive, analysis of the French Revolution. For Edgar, there was in history “no comparable example of a more sudden, more powerful, or more violent shaking and reanimation of humanity.”¹⁰⁶ As a latter-day Jacobin and Sansculotte, Edgar loved the French Revolution, especially its most extreme aspects. His particular hero remained Robespierre, despite his objections to Robespierre’s usurpation of authority and his late attempt to impose his vision of France on the Sansculottes.

¹⁰¹ *SKKS*2, 52.

¹⁰² *SKKS*2, 255–63; Stepelevich, *Young Hegelians*, 265–70.

¹⁰³ *SKKS*2, 259; Stepelevich, *Young Hegelians*, 267.

¹⁰⁴ *SKKS*2, 262; Stepelevich, *Young Hegelians*, 269.

¹⁰⁵ *SKKS*2, 259; Stepelevich, *Young Hegelians*, 267.

¹⁰⁶ *BB&SG*, 89.

A Hegelian criticism of Edgar would say that the freedom experienced by the dissolution of the monarchy and the three estates is only negative or abstract. It is the absence of any cohesive social morality or ethical order of life (*Sittlichkeit*). It provides no frame of reference for the individual to feel at home in the world. Each individual who experiences pure freedom must at the same time also feel completely alone, deserted, or lost in a savage world. This radical alienation of self-conscious spirit from its world and its fellows cuts each individual off from any possibility of any kind of solidarity with any part of the rest of the world and soon leads to a Hobbesian state of nature, a chaos of selfishness, a horror of isolation and arrogance that quickly turns toward murder as the individual's only chance for self-preservation and meaning. Thomas Carlyle lamented: "The Guillotine, by its speed of going, will give index of the general velocity of the Republic. The clanking of its huge axe, rising and falling there, in horrid systole-diastole, is portion of the whole enormous Life-movement and pulsation of the Sansculottic System!"¹⁰⁷ Hegel and Carlyle were of one mind about the Sansculottes and their ghastly jokes about "sneezing into the basket." Hegel called death by guillotine during Robespierre's Reign of Terror the most meaningless of deaths, and likened the callous lopping off of human heads to the routine harvesting of cabbages.¹⁰⁸

Stirner, Edgar, and Proudhon were all as ruthless as Robespierre. But while Robespierre was known as "The Incorruptible" and was quite a slave to his own conception of virtue, the other three were amoral, self-serving, and unscrupulous. Proudhon, who is generally regarded as the founder of modern anarchism, was anti-feminist, pro-slavery, anti-labor union, anti-Semitic, and completely willing to use force to crush dissent.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, Edgar's whole approach to general human liberation anticipated the "by any means necessary" approach attributed to Malcolm X. Most blatant of all, Stirner emphasised over and over again his basic right to abuse any other person in any way he saw fit to promote his own simple comforts and greedy desires. But he allowed other individuals the same set of rights. The result was the Hobbesian war of all against all. Stirner relished the fight and expected the strongest and most cunning to win. The absolute

¹⁰⁷ Thomas Carlyle, *The French Revolution*, vol. 3, "The Guillotine"; bk. 4, "Terror"; ch. 6, "Risen Against Tyrants."

¹⁰⁸ Hegel, *Phänomenologie* (ed. Hoffmeister), 418–19; Miller, ¶ 590, p. 360.

¹⁰⁹ David Leopold, "Biographical and Other Notes on the Text," in Max Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, trans. Steven Byington, rev. and ed. David Leopold (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 360, n. 60.

self-determining power that Stirner wanted for the individual, Edgar wanted for humanity in general. Neither Stirner nor Edgar cared how this power would be achieved or who might be trampled in the process. Stirner was not the least bit reluctant to justify theft in the furtherance of the individual's merest caprices.¹¹⁰ Stirner even cited Edgar in support of the proposition that human freedom can never be realised under any government.¹¹¹

Bruno always wrote disparagingly of the "the masses" (*Die Masse*). This was the main reason that Marx and Engels broke with him and Edgar and lampooned them in *The Holy Family*.¹¹² A year later Marx and Engels all but ignored Edgar as they ridiculed Bruno, Stirner, and Feuerbach in *The German Ideology*,¹¹³ where their only mention of Edgar alluded to his *Die liberalen Bestrebungen in Deutschland* (Zürich und Winterthur: Literarisches Comptoir, 1843) as an "epoch-making work" in Stirner's library.¹¹⁴

Edgar accepted Bruno's basic idea that spirit acts mostly through the genius of a few select world-historical individuals and just drags the essentially inert mass of the rest of humanity along like so much dead wood. Dialectic and critique would eventually demand that an intellectual elite of freethinkers rule the world. The masses would not even notice or care. Marx and Engels, who put all their faith in the workers, were clearly offended by this abstract individualism of Bruno and its immediate literary fruits, so much so that, in the early to mid-1840s, before they had cleared the path to write *The Communist Manifesto*, they considered their primary enemies to be Bruno and his Young Hegelian allies, especially Stirner, not the capitalist authoritarian state or its apologists. This ideological difference quickly destroyed Marx's friendship with Bruno and Engels' with Edgar in 1842–3.

¹¹⁰ Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, 227.

¹¹¹ Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, 202–4.

¹¹² Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx, *Die heilige Familie, oder Kritik der kritischen Kritik, gegen Bruno Bauer & Consorten* (Frankfurt am Main: Literarische Anstalt, 1845). Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Werke*, 2 (Berlin: Dietz, 1962), 3–223; Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Holy Family, or, Critique of Critical Critique*, trans. R. Dixon (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956).

¹¹³ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Die deutsche Ideologie. Kritik der neuesten deutschen Philosophie in ihren Repräsentanten Feuerbach, B. Bauer und Stirner, und des deutschen Sozialismus in seinen verschiedenen Propheten* (Moscow: Marx-Engels-Lenin-Institut, 1932). Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Werke*, 3 (Berlin: Dietz, 1969), 9–530; Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, trans. S. Ryazanskaya (Moscow: Progress, 1964).

¹¹⁴ "... E. Bauers epochmachende Schrift ..." (Marx and Engels, *Deutsche Ideologie*, 318, 560, n. 125; Ryazanskaya, 365, 682 n. 122).

Other Young Hegelians also reacted strongly against Bruno, Edgar, and Stirner, though not from a communist point of view. Schmidt, the last Young Hegelian, wrote in his autobiography concerning the inexorable progression of Young Hegelian ideas: "If someone has once heard of Hegel, he must proceed to Strauss, from Strauss to Feuerbach, and from Feuerbach to Bruno Bauer. I accomplished the consequence of this thought in myself, but soon came to the further conclusion . . . that Stirner makes more sense than Bruno Bauer and that one must proceed beyond Stirner to arrive at the most abstract individualism."¹¹⁵ He indeed proceeded beyond Stirner and called for an end to the entire Young Hegelian movement.¹¹⁶ Schmidt, a Lutheran minister, deserted both Hegelianism and the church completely even before the 1848 revolutions, and settled down to a bourgeois life of materialist anthropology, secondary school administration, and phrenology.

It is but a short step from Bruno's notion of the rightful dominance of critical spirit over the phlegmatic masses to the self-righteousness of the terrorist. Edgar took this step.

APPRAISAL

All terrorism, even if secular or atheistic, is religious in the sense that, etymologically, religion is that which binds individuals and groups to certain traditions of belief and behavior. Terrorism necessarily involves fanatic, almost Tertullianesque devotion to whatever cause is being espoused. It invokes reason, but relies upon blind faith in the world-historical future of its own self-righteous ideology. It pretends to be already mediated (*vermittelt*), or at least to be seeking mediation (*Vermittlung*), in the Hegelian sense, but in fact is terminally one-sided, again in the Hegelian sense. Far from being rational and excluding faith, even the atheist terrorists epitomize faith in their own version of reason, that is, their own understanding (*Verstand*), while they exclude reason itself, that is, the overarching, synthesizing, universal Hegelian, Thomistic, or Aristotelian reason (*Vernunft*). This misapprehension of reason is the fatal internal self-contradiction of both anarchist and terrorist theory. They both seek freedom for all but can do so only by imposing violent and unreasonable conditions upon their adherents and non-adherents alike. Anarchism

¹¹⁵ Stepelevich, *Young Hegelians*, 379.

¹¹⁶ Karl Schmidt, *Das Verstandesthum und das Individuum* (Leipzig: Wigand, 1846), 245. Stepelevich, *Young Hegelians*, 410.

and terrorism compel the unwilling just as much as any of the governments they seek to overthrow and are as evangelistic as any of the institutionalised evangelisms they seek to bury.

The author of *SKKS* committed no violent acts himself, but approved of them and, during the riots of 1848–9, actively encouraged them. We can speculate about what the pre-1849 Edgar might have thought of the Irish Republican Army, the Weather Underground, the Red Brigades, Timothy McVeigh, or Osama bin Laden. He may have commended all their tactics, but not all their motivations. Surely he would not have supported the Irish Catholic sectarianism of the IRA or the Muslim fundamentalism of bin Laden; yet the leftist aspirations of the Weathermen or the Brigades, or even the libertarian extremism of McVeigh, however amorphous or incoherent, may have appealed to him.

Ein Menschenleben

Hegel and Stirner

Lawrence S. Stepelevich

One of the most enduring of literary themes is that which sets out the course of a human life as a series of discrete stages. It makes an early appearance in the ancient story of the Sphinx, who asked “What walks on four legs in the morning, on two at noon, and on three in the evening?” Oedipus answered: “Man.” The theme was repeated in literature from century to century.

Hegel repeated the theme in the course of his lectures on the third part of his *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*, the *Philosophy of Mind*. The subject is taken up, in detail, in Paragraph 396 of Hegel’s *Encyclopedia*.¹ In these lectures, Hegel enumerates four stages of individual development: childhood, adolescence, maturity, and old age. It is of interest to note that Johann Caspar Schmidt, who assumed the pseudonym Max Stirner, would have been familiar with Hegel’s treatment of the topic, as he had, in the spring semester of 1827, heard Hegel himself lecture upon this very subject. These lectures must have affected Stirner quite strongly, as his own description of the stages in a human life are not only congruent with Hegel’s presentation but also played a powerful role in the formation of his own thought.

Here is Hegel’s summary of the first three stages of a human life:

He begins with *Childhood* – mind wrapped up in itself. His next step is the fully developed antithesis, the strain and struggle of a universality which is still subjective (as seen in ideals, fancies, hopes, ambitions) against his immediate

¹ For the English translation I have used Hegel’s *Philosophy of Mind* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); for the German original I have used G. W. F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaft*, 1830 (Hamburg: Meiner, 1969).

individuality. And that individuality marks both the world which, as it exists, fails to meet his ideal requirements, and the position of the individual himself, who is still short of independence and not fully equipped for the part he has to play (*Youth*). Thirdly, we see man in his in his true relation to his environment, *recognising the objective necessity and reasonableness of the world as he finds it* . . . to (*Manhood*).²

This is but Hegel's summary of the stages. In the course of his lectures he developed a rather detailed explication of each of these stages found in the course of *ein Menschenleben* or what Hegel terms the natural course of a human life ("*der natürliche Verlauf der Lebensalter*"). Stirner also deals with this "*Verlauf der Lebensalter*" in one of the most important and brief statements of his philosophy – the first chapter of *Der Einzige und Sein Eigenthum*, which bears the title "Ein Menschenleben."³ Both Hegel and Stirner hold to exactly the same quadratic pattern. With Stirner, as with Hegel, the formula sets forth the four ages of man: childhood (*Kinde*), adolescence (*Jüngling*), maturity (*Mann*), and old age (*Greis*). Each age will manifest a specific attitude toward the world. In form, if not entirely in content, the four-fold pattern is identical in both Hegel and Stirner.

In following the four-fold pattern as laid out by Hegel, Stirner's description of how the child (*Kind*) passes into an adolescent (*Jüngling*) closely resembles the passage from slavery to stoicism as found in Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. That Stirner should employ elements from Hegel's treatment of the famous "Master-Slave" (*Herrschaft und Knechtschaft*) dialectic is not surprising. As it happened, Hegel himself discussed the subject of that dialectic in that same series of lectures which Stirner attended in the spring of 1827. In short, Stirner would have been familiar in both the matter of a Hegelian "Lebenslauf" and the *Knecht*'s struggle for independence.

With Hegel, the transition from childhood to adolescence appears as more of an expected natural development, a passage from one "shape" of consciousness, that of the child, to a higher stage, that of the youth. It is otherwise with Stirner. For him, the will and determination of the child play a major role in mediating the advance of consciousness from

² Hegel, *Enzyklopädie* ¶ 396. The translated *Zusätze* of Boumann's 1845 text are included in the English edition [see note 1]. Unhappily, the *Zusätze* are not appended to the *Meiner* edition of the *Enzyklopädie*.

³ All citations from Stirner, unless otherwise noted, will be taken from the first chapter of *Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum*. The English translation of Steven T. Byington, which remains the only English translation, will be used: Max Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, trans. Steven Byington, rev. and ed. David Leopold (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

a state of childish dependency to youthful rebellion. Nevertheless, for both, the starting point is the same – childhood is an age of innocent inner harmony, a period of acceptance and unreflective activity. Hegel described the mind of a child as “mind wrapped up in itself” (*“in sich eingehüllten Geiste”*) and “a time of natural harmony.” Stirner restates this: “The fairest part of childhood passes without the necessity of coming to blows with reason . . . and is deaf to good arguments and principles.”⁴

At the beginning of childhood, for both Stirner and Hegel, the child willingly plays the role of the slave (*Knecht*), and, with Stirner, “we defer to our parents as a natural power. . . .”⁵ However, for Stirner, as the child matures, there is, to borrow something appropriate from the Marxists, a “Sparticist” revolt. The slave realises its own mastery over the physical order. But this victory over the power of the physical leads to the emergence within the mind of the child of a second and greater power – an immaterial, “spiritual” power. Whether this passage from childhood to adolescence, as given in Hegel’s *Lebenslauf* or in Stirner’s “Ein Menschenleben,” is accomplished with or without a struggle, it nevertheless arrives in both cases at a new threat to conscious freedom. This new threat is expressed, as Hegel understands it, as the domination of abstract “ideals, imaginings, ‘oughts,’ hopes, etc.” (*“Ideale, Einbildungen, Sollen, Hoffnungen, u.s.f.”*).⁶ In short, for Stirner, just as for Hegel, the end of childhood brings forth yet another, and more powerful, enemy than the physical – abstract thoughts, *“Ideale.”*

In Stirner’s words: “As in childhood one had to overcome the resistance of the *laws of the world*, so now in everything that he proposes he is met by an objection of the mind, of reason, of his *own conscience*.”⁷

And so, for Stirner, the first threat to the mind of the child is cast in the form of a *concrete physical* enemy – a form that demands obedience under the threat of physical punishment. It is only after this enemy is overcome by the stubbornness of the child (its *Trotz* or *Eigensinn*) that the emergence of the Stoic consciousness take place. This consciousness is marked by an *ataraxia* that no longer cares for the threats or promises of the physical world. It has overcome the world. However, in this very overcoming, in

⁴ Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, 14.

⁵ Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, 14.

⁶ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, 61.

⁷ Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, 15.

which the Stoic is cast back into his or her own thoughts of the world, abstract thought becomes the new reality – thoughts that are necessarily opposed to the actuality of the physical world. The Stoic consciousness plays the same role in the historical passage from slavery to final reason and freedom as the young adolescent plays in the phenomenological passage to maturity. Both Stoic and adolescent are locked in a world of their own making, in a world created when a painful physical reality has been rejected. But then it follows that these “free” thoughts turn themselves against the very mind that gave them birth. They alienate themselves from the mind that produced them and set themselves in opposition to that mind. (The theme of estrangement [*Entfremdung*] is not uncommon among the Young Hegelians.) Henceforth, as Stirner notes, “our course of action is determined by our thoughts (ideas, conceptions, faith) as it is in childhood by the commands of our parents.”⁸

For Stirner, the path from the obedience of the *Kind* to the idealised rebellion of the *Jüngling* is not an easy “*natürliche Verlauf der Lebensalter*.” For Hegel, it might have indeed been “natural,” and it was said of him that he was the particular favourite of his mother. Stirner’s passage from childhood to adolescence, until the time he entered the University of Berlin, seems to have been a painful one.

For anyone familiar with Stirner’s personal history, his discussion of “*Ein Menschenleben*” is autobiographic. In the first year of his life, his natural father, Johann Schmidt, died. Stirner’s mother soon remarried, to a certain middle-aged Heinrich Ballerstedt, and shortly after her remarriage, the young mother and her son moved to his home in the small city of Kulm, on the Vistula, far from their first home in Bayreuth. In a few years, the young mother, perhaps grieving over the death of her first husband, the loss of her own home, and the death of her young daughter, drifted slowly into an insanity that lasted the rest of her life. She died, hospitalised, in Berlin in 1859, three years after the death of her son. The name “Ballerstedt” was never adopted by the young Johann Caspar Schmidt. That his early life could not have been a happy one is borne out by what facts we know, and by the tone of bitterness marking his work.

“*Ein Menschenleben*” contains three references to a father figure. The father appears fiercely set on the disciplining and punishing of his child. The “*Kind*” referred to in the second paragraph of the work, the child

⁸ Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, 15.

who must “assert its own persistence” (“*behauptet sein eignes Bestehen*”), is seen as faced with the threat of the “*Rute*” – the father’s rod. But,

Behind the rod, mightier than it, stands our – obduracy, our obdurate courage. By degrees we get at what is behind everything that was mysterious and uncanny to us, the mysteriously dreaded might of the rod, the father’s stern look, etc., and behind all we find our *ataraxia*.⁹

If one seeks the emotional ground of *Der Einzige*, it is to be found in Stirner’s youthful sorrows.

In Hegel’s treatment of the *Herrschaft und Knechtschaft* dialectic, the first stages of the Slave’s self-consciousness is found in the Slave’s display of a reluctance, an obstinacy, towards fulfilling the commands of the Master. In Stirner’s “Ein Menschenleben” this might be said to be the first movement of consciousness against the “dreaded might of the rod, the father’s stern look. . . .” This first movement is to be seen in the Slave’s (or child’s) obstinacy (*Trotz*). For Hegel, this “Self-will is the freedom which entrenches itself in some particularity and is still in bondage.”¹⁰ This stubbornness is not independence, but it does prefigure the coming of the Stoic mind. When this stage is reached, there is a consciousness of one’s freedom from physical determination, an *ataraxia* that is merely the subjective mind’s knowing itself not to be of the physical world. The refusal to obey parental authority (*Herrschaft*) signals the coming of the adolescent mind. Developed Stoicism is only the consciousness of one’s freedom from all physical coercion; it is a negative freedom, a freedom from an actual encounter with the corporeal world. The identity of the child with the sensuous world has been lost, and a new world, of mind, has been obtained. However, it is only the beginning of the path that consciousness must take on its journey to realised freedom. It must first pass over into scepticism and then into the unhappy consciousness (“*Das unglückliche Bewusstsein*”). It is only after this final and tormented “shape of consciousness” is negated and transcended (*aufgehoben*) that the freedom of reason will be realised. I propose that this long phenomenological passage, Hegel’s “highway of despair and path of doubt,” was followed to its final conclusion by Stirner.

Just as the Stoic does, the adolescent consciousness rejects the sensuous world in favour of the world of thought. From this rejection there naturally follows a critical attitude towards that rejected object-world of

⁹ Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, 14.

¹⁰ G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Mind*, trans A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 121.

childhood. In short, the innocent *Kind* has developed into the critical, and often rebellious, *Jüngling*. In Hegel's words:

The content of the ideal imbues the youth with the feeling of the power to act; he therefore fancies himself called and qualified to transform the world, or at least to put the world back on the right path from which, so it seems to him, it has strayed.¹¹

For Stirner, as well as for Hegel, the clearest expression of that adolescent "feeling of the power to act" that fancies itself able to "transform the world" could be found in lesser or greater degree within every radical revolutionary in history. Stirner perceived it most clearly among his contemporaries, the "*Junghegelianer*."

Here are Stirner's words concerning the mind of the *Jüngling*:

Mind is the name of the *first* self-discovery, the first undeification of the divine; that is, of the uncanny, the spooks, the "powers above." Our fresh feeling of youth, this feeling of self, now defers to nothing; the world is discredited, for we are above it, we are *mind*.¹²

This youthful feeling as self-feeling that places the youth in the standpoint of "the heavenly" forms a major basis of Stirner's critique of the Feuerbachian project as an adolescent project, one understood as such only by someone who had himself transcended adolescence – in short, ein *Mann*. Stirner considered himself to be not only a *Mann* but also a unique man, an *Einziger*.

Stirner's statement of the distinction between the adolescent and the mature adult is clearly drawn from Hegel. Here are Stirner's words:

The man is distinguished from the youth by the fact that he takes the world as it is, instead of everywhere fancying it amiss and wanting to improve it, model it after his ideal; in him the view that one must deal with the world according to his *interest*, not according to his *ideals*, becomes confirmed.¹³

With Hegel, manhood emerges when the youth finally recognises "his true relation to his environment, recognising the objective necessity and reasonableness of the world as he finds it – a world no longer incomplete. . . ."¹⁴

The argument has been made, by me and others, that Stirner's *Der Einzige* had a profoundly depressing effect upon the optimism of both

¹¹ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, 61.

¹² Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, 14.

¹³ Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, 16.

¹⁴ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, 55.

Feuerbach and his then-enthusiastic follower Karl Marx. After Stirner's work, Feuerbach virtually ceased to publish, and Marx resigned his role as Feuerbach's disciple with his brief, and critical, "Theses on Feuerbach." Marx, in a hectic effort to "settle accounts with his philosophic conscience," was shortly joined by his "Second Fiddle," Engels. They joined to compose an exhaustive and distorted critique of Stirner. The result was the unpublishable *German Ideology*. Stirner would have considered their project adolescent, and indeed even the Marxist biographer Franz Mehring was forced to admit that the work was of "a rather puerile (*knabenhaft*) character."¹⁵

Stirner's nonconcern with the physical overthrow of the perceived authority, which Marx considered to be capitalism, the moneyed *Herr* facing the proletarian *Knecht*, is his basis for criticising Stirner. But, unlike Marx, Stirner recognised "the world as it is," and it would have to be "dealt with" in the light of his interests – not in the light of what Hegel termed "ideals, imaginary reality, 'oughts,' hopes, etc." If it happens that what one wants is prevented by what is, then one might well have to do without it. But in any case, at least individuals need not enslave themselves. In short, Stirnerians might be forced to do the bidding of Masters, but they will not be of the same mind. They have their own mind, which they knowingly possess as their property, their *Eigentum*. However, the adolescent mind is a consciousness not fully self-conscious, and so not fully free. It can fall back into being a child, a slave, but because it now has "its own mind," it becomes a slave to that mind. Youth are enthusiastic for ideals and causes, for idealistic "*Sachen*," and in this regard we know there are more than a few "pious" or "atheistic" idealists who can always find a youthful following to support their own youthful hopes and dreams of an idealised reality. But maturity brings an end to youthful dreams.

That the dreams of youth are lost is often presented simply as a disillusionment, and the youth's passage to maturity an event to be mourned. In his poem *In Memoriam*, Wordsworth, who, like Hegel, was born in 1770, returns to the ancient theme of the four ages of life.

... Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
 Shades of the prison-house begin to close
 Upon the growing boy,
 But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
 He sees it in his joy;

¹⁵ Franz Mehring, *Karl Marx* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962), 110.

the Youth, who daily farther from the east
 Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
 And by the vision splended
 Is on his way attended;
 At length the Man perceives it die away,
 And fade into the light of common day.

For Wordsworth the evaporation of the youth's "vision splended" appears simply as a loss. In this nostalgic sorrow of lost youth, Wordsworth was one with the Romantics of his age. But for others of his age, such as Hegel and Stirner, the advance of the youth into "the light of common day" was to be welcomed.

Although Stirner follows Hegel in considering old age, *Greis*, as the fourth and final stage of a human life, he does not, as Hegel does, give any description of that final age. He merely passes by the subject by remarking, in the final sentence of "Ein Menschenleben," "Finally, the old man? When I become one, there will still be time enough to speak of that."¹⁶ One cannot but wish that he had been allowed time to "speak of that." But even if there had been enough time, would Stirner have spoken of that fourth age? Perhaps not, simply because it was a *fourth* age. After all, the Hegelian dialectic is a triad, as the old formula has it: thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. The triadic dialectic of Childhood, Adolescence, Manhood is almost too perfect to be lost with the addition of a fourth age – so *Mann* must be the last level to discuss. I suggest that the reason Hegel did not avoid the quadratic pattern of "*ein Lebenslauf*" and so went on to discuss the *Greis* is to be found in his first description of that pattern as "*der natürliche Verlauf der Lebensalter*" – it is "*natürliche*" and not dialectical. The four-fold pattern is, for Hegel, a natural ordering, and although subject to the dialectic, it is distinct from the triadic dialectic in that its middle term, the antithesis, is divided into two opposing poles. The complex explanation that Hegel presents for a tetradic development within nature is set out in the "Introduction" to his *Naturphilosophie*. However, whether or not Hegel employs a triadic dialectical analysis upon "*der natürliche Verlauf der Lebensalter*," it seems that Stirner did.

In Stirner, the dialectic by which this last level is reached is fully Hegelian and triadic in character, as is clearly evident in Stirner's development of "Ein Menschenleben." To state it, perhaps too concisely, it runs this way: The child is innocently lost in the realities of the world, is

¹⁶ Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, 18.

unreflectively embodied. The youth, the adolescent, is reflectively embodied, dominated by the realm of ideas, and seeks to be disembodied. They stand in antithetical opposition. The mature man is the product of the *Aufhebung* of both, preserving in himself both child and adolescent, and yet transcending their limits, both physical and mental. The physical and the ideal world become his own *Eigentum*:

The man finds himself as embodied spirit. Boys had only *unintellectual interests* (i.e. interests devoid of thoughts and ideas), youths only *intellectual* ones; the man has bodily, personal, egoistical interests.¹⁷

This triadic dialectic, with the terms changed, appears throughout Stirner's work, and gives the work an internal unity and cohesiveness that accounts for its enduring interest. In any case, the introductory triad of "Ein Menschenleben" prefigures the whole of *Der Einziger und Sein Eigentum*. The antithetical second term of the triad, the adolescent mind, stands opposed to the mature and realistic view of "der Mann." The idealistic and reforming youthful consciousness, manifested in any judgement, in ethics, in social life, in politics or in philosophy, is indeed a destructive force. As a mature "*Einziger*," Stirner would stand above it, as well as the childish mind. According to Stirner, to the child only the real is rational, to the youth only the rational (mental) is real. In a rhetorical move, Stirner presents this opposition as if it had no possibility of resolution. But can it be resolved? Stirner takes up the subject a final time in the final chapter of his work "*Der Einziger*." In his words:

The opposition of the real [the child mind as thesis?] and the ideal [the adolescent mind as anti-thesis?] is an irreconcilable one, and the one can never become the other . . . The opposition of the two is not to be vanquished otherwise than if some one annihilates both. Only in this "some one," the third party, does the opposition find its end [in Stirner's mind].¹⁸

Stirner takes himself to be the one who "annihilates both." This understanding of himself has come about as the result of a dialectical *Aufhebung* – and is a fine example of an exercise in Hegelian dialectics.

There is insufficient space here to argue the point, but I propose that for Stirner, just as for Hegel, mature reason (*Vernunft*) is that which transcends and negates (*hebt auf*) both childish sensuality as well as

¹⁷ Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, 17.

¹⁸ Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, 320.

adolescent ideals – or what Hegel termed “*Ideale, Einbildungen, Sollen, Hoffnungen, u.s.f.*” Perhaps Stirnerians might look to Hegel and ask a question: Might it be the case that Stirner considered himself to have reached that level of thought in which “The real is rational and the rational is real” (“*Was vernünftig ist, das ist wirklich; und was wirklich ist, das ist vernünftig*”)?

‘The State and I’

Max Stirner’s Anarchism

David Leopold

*‘Seht Stirner, seht ihn, den bedächt’gen Schrankenhasser,
Für jetzt noch trinkt er Bier, bald trinkt er Blut wie Wasser.
So wie die andern schreien ihr wild: à bas les rois!
Ergänzet Stirner gleich: à bas aussi les lois!’*

‘See *Stirner* too, the thoughtful moderation-hater;
Though still on beer, he’ll soon be drinking blood like water.
And if the others shout a wild: *à bas les rois* [down with the kings]!
Stirner is sure to add: *à bas aussi les lois* [down with the laws as well]!’¹

I

It is a commonplace to remark that Max Stirner (born Johann Caspar Schmidt, 1806–56) is a little-known figure in the history of political and philosophical thought. However, that obscurity should not be exaggerated. Stirner is not only a familiar figure within certain rather specialised, and largely academic, circles – such as those with an interest either in Left Hegelianism or in the early intellectual development of Karl Marx (1818–83) – he is also more widely known as a member of, and influence upon, the anarchist tradition.

¹ This epigraph is taken from an evocative satirical poem describing the Berlin Left Hegelians, entitled *Der Triumph des Glaubens* (*The Triumph of Faith*), written by Friedrich Engels and Edgar Bauer and first published in 1842. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Werke* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1967), *Ergänzungsband* 2, 301; *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels Collected Works* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975), vol. 2, 336.

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Stirner's name is regularly included as part of the modern pantheon in historically oriented surveys of anarchist thought, and his best-known work, *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* (1844), is often excerpted in anthologies of anarchist writings.² (*Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* might be rendered somewhat literally as *The Unique Individual and His Property*, but the book is better known as *The Ego and Its Own* in its English translation.) For example, April Carter describes Stirner as a 'major anarchist theorist'³; George Woodcock maintains that elements in Stirner's thought 'bring him clearly into the anarchist tradition'⁴; and Peter Marshall insists that Stirner 'belongs to the anarchist tradition as one of its most original and creative thinkers'.⁵ In this context, however, some caution might be advisable. Historical surveys of anarchism can exhibit a rather expansionist account of their subject matter (Marshall's survey, for example, portrays the anarchist standpoint as present in views that range from Chinese Taoism in the sixth century BCE to those of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher).⁶ Nevertheless, this characterisation of Stirner's thought also appears in more specialised studies of the writings of this Left Hegelian author. For example, John Carroll describes Stirner as 'the prototypal anarchist'⁷; and John P. Clark maintains that it is as a contributor to the anarchist tradition that both Stirner's 'contemporary relevance' and his 'greatest historical importance' are to be found.⁸

My concern here is not with the nature or extent of Stirner's influence on the anarchist tradition but rather with the proper characterisation of his thought. I do not mean to deny, or underestimate, those historical connections.⁹ Stirner's influence on American individualist anarchism – especially on Benjamin Tucker (1854–1939) and his contemporaries,

² Anthologies of anarchist writings that contain excerpts from *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* include Irving L. Horowitz, ed., *The Anarchists* (New York: Dell, 1964); and George Woodcock, ed., *The Anarchist Reader* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1977).

³ April Carter, *The Political Theory of Anarchism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), 1.

⁴ George Woodcock, *Anarchism. A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (London: Penguin, 1986), 81.

⁵ Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible. A History of Anarchism* (London: HarperCollins, 1992), 220.

⁶ See Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, ch. 4 and p. 559.

⁷ John Carroll, "Introduction," Max Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*, selected and introduced by John Carroll (London: Jonathan Cape, 1971), 34.

⁸ John P. Clark, *Max Stirner's Egoism* (London: Freedom Press, 1976), 15 and 87.

⁹ For an attempt to deny Stirner's influence on the anarchist tradition, see R.W.K. Paterson, *The Nihilistic Egoist. Max Stirner* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the University of Hull, 1971), 102 ff.

including James Walker (1845–1904), John Beverley Robinson (1853–1923), and Steven Byington (1868–1958) – is both widely accepted and well documented.¹⁰ Moreover, additional claims can plausibly be made for the wider influence of Stirner’s work on the anarchist tradition. Among modern European anarchists, for example, Stirner can be said to have influenced Sidney E. Parker (1929–) and his journal *Minus One* in Britain; Emile Armand (1872–1963) and his magazine *L’en dehors* in France; Enzo Martucci (1904–75) the author of the *Manifesto dei fuorigregge* in Italy¹¹; and Kurt Helmut Zube (1905–91) founder of the *Mackay Gesellschaft* in Germany. However, it is not this historical influence but rather the popular classification of Stirner as an anarchist that forms the subject matter of the present paper. More precisely, I am concerned here with the plausibility of this characterisation of Stirner, with exactly what kind of an anarchist he might be, and with the nature and worth of his ideas about the state and what might replace it.

II

In order to assess the plausibility of this characterisation of Stirner, some preliminary account of anarchism is needed. The anarchist tradition, however, is a diverse one, and any account of the beliefs that its members share is likely to be contentious. It is perhaps useful to distinguish between what I shall call the negative and positive dimensions of anarchist thought. The negative dimension concerns the social and political institutions (primarily the state) that anarchists reject, while the positive dimension concerns the kind of social arrangements that might characterise their preferred form of (stateless) society.

The account of the negative dimension of anarchist thought that I endorse here is a minimal one – namely, that anarchists share a disapproval of the state and, more precisely, maintain that the state is an illegitimate institution. Because one could not plausibly describe someone

¹⁰ On individualist anarchism in America, see, for example, James J. Martin, *Men Against the State. The Expositors of Individualist Anarchism in America, 1827–1908* (DeKalb, Ill.: Adrian Allen, 1953); Paul Avrich, *Anarchist Portraits* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), especially ch. 10; Frank H. Brooks, “American Individualist Anarchism: What It Was and Why It Failed,” *Journal of Political Ideologies*, vol. 1 (1996) pp. 75–95; and Ronald Creagh, *L’anarchisme aux États-Unis* (Berne: Peter Lang, 1983), vol. 1, ch. 10.

¹¹ “Fuorigregge” is an unusual neologism formed by combining “fuori [outside]” and “gregge [herd].” The *Manifesto dei fuorigregge* is literally the manifesto of those who do not belong to the herd (or, less literally, the nonconformist’s manifesto).

as an anarchist unless that person subscribed to this negative view of the state, I refer to this negative view as the core anarchist belief. This suggestion is not to be confused with two other, less plausible, accounts of the negative core beliefs of anarchism. Anarchism is not to be identified with an opposition to, or abhorrence of, organisation (the popular association of anarchism with chaos and disorder is, in this sense, misguided). Nor is anarchism to be identified with an opposition to, or abhorrence of, power or authority. There seems no good reason to suppose that anarchists must be hostile to all forms of power and authority, even if they reject those forms of power and authority associated with the state.¹²

This minimal and negative account of core anarchist beliefs – as endorsing the claim that the state is illegitimate – has a number of advantages: It is widely supported in the literature¹³; it has some etymological support ('anarchy' derives from the Greek word 'ἀναρχία' where 'ἀν' means 'without' and 'ἀρχη' means 'rule'); and, unlike some more expansive definitions, it stands a chance of including (at least, many of) the considerable variety of ideological positions that anarchists adopt.¹⁴

Beyond this minimal and negative consensus that the state is illegitimate, there are, of course, many areas of dispute among anarchists. Some of these concern the proper interpretation of the negative core claim, that states lack legitimacy. In this context, and following the account of A. John Simmons, two central areas of disagreement can be identified. These concern the *status* and *consequences*, respectively, of this core anarchist claim.¹⁵

The disagreement about the *status* of the core anarchist claim concerns whether it is *a priori* or *a posteriori* truth that states lack legitimacy.

¹² See Michael Taylor, *Community, Anarchy, and Liberty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 10–25.

¹³ See, for example, Raymond Geuss, *History and Illusion in Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 52–3; and George Crowder, *Classical Anarchism. The Political Thought of Godwin, Proudhon, Bakunin, and Kropotkin* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 4. "Government" is occasionally substituted for "state" in this context. See, for example, April Carter, *The Political Theory of Anarchism*, p. 14; and Alan Carter, "Some Notes on 'Anarchism,'" *Anarchist Studies*, volume 1 (1993), 141.

¹⁴ As Rex Martin remarks: "It may well be that the only thing that all anarchists have in common is what anarchism denies." See Rex Martin, "Wolff's Defence of Philosophical Anarchism," *Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 24 (1974), 140.

¹⁵ For the distinctions between *a priori* and *a posteriori* anarchism, and between strong and weak anarchism, see A. John Simmons, "Philosophical Anarchism," in *Justification and Legitimacy. Essays on Rights and Obligations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 105. I have found this article extremely useful, and I rely on it especially (but not only) in the next two paragraphs.

According to *a priori* anarchists, all possible states are illegitimate. Typically, they hold that some essential feature of the state (its coercive or hierarchical character, for example) makes it impossible for something to be both a state and legitimate. In contrast, *a posteriori* anarchists maintain only that all known states lack legitimacy, and that they do so by virtue of some contingent characteristic that they possess. *A posteriori* anarchists do not claim that it is impossible for something to be both a state and legitimate. (They might hold this position either because they are not persuaded by arguments purporting to establish this impossibility, or because they subscribe to an ideal of legitimacy of which all actual states fall short but which it is not impossible that an entity which is plausibly described as a state might fulfil.)¹⁶

The disagreement about the *consequences* of the core anarchist claim concerns whether rejection of the legitimacy of the state entails more than a denial of political obligation (speaking very roughly, a denial that subjects have a moral obligation to obey the law). *Weak* anarchism maintains that the illegitimacy of the state, and the consequent absence of a foundation for political obligation, entails only that individuals have no reason to obey the law simply because it is the law. For weak anarchists there is no presumption in favour of obedience to the state; rather, individuals are encouraged to decide on a case-by-case basis how best to respond to the state's commands. Those individuals might still do what the law requires, albeit on the basis of other (moral or prudential) reasons (and not because it is required by law). In contrast, *strong* anarchism maintains that the illegitimacy of the state, and the consequent absence of a foundation for political obligation, help ground a positive obligation to oppose and attempt to eliminate the state (insofar as this is within the power of the individual). Of course, this remains only one obligation among many that an individual might have – and it is not necessary to think of that obligation as one which an individual is always required to discharge – but it is an obligation that weak anarchists will deny.

As already noted, it is apparent that many anarchists subscribe not only to a negative account of the failings of the state, but also to a positive account of the social arrangements that might replace it. This positive vision provides a further area of dispute among anarchists. In the present

¹⁶ See, for example, the remarks about the “theoretical” possibility of unanimous direct democracy in Robert Paul Wolff, *In Defence of Anarchism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 20–3. Wolff suggests that unanimous direct democracy is “so restricted in its application that it offers no serious hope of ever being embodied in an actual state.” Robert Paul Wolff, *In Defence of Anarchism*, 70.

context, two central areas of disagreement might be identified. These concern the *status* and *content*, respectively, of the positive social vision of anarchism. The disagreement about the status of the positive anarchist vision concerns whether it is necessary to subscribe to such a vision in order to count as an anarchist. The disagreement about the content of the positive vision concerns the nature of the anarchist's preferred form of (stateless) society.

With regard to the first of these issues, I am reluctant to stipulate that an anarchist must subscribe to a positive social vision in order to be characterised as an anarchist.¹⁷ It appears that individuals who maintain that the state is illegitimate are best described as anarchists, whether or not they also endorse a positive vision of a stateless society. Because the relationship between being an anarchist and possessing a positive social vision is, on this account, a contingent one, I shall refer to the positive social vision of anarchists as among the peripheral beliefs of anarchism (as opposed to the core negative belief about the illegitimacy of the state that all anarchists share). In describing these views as peripheral, I do not mean to suggest that they are unimportant or uninteresting, merely that one could plausibly be described as an anarchist without subscribing to such a positive social vision.

With regard to the second of these issues, it will be apparent that those anarchists who do share a commitment to a positive social vision frequently disagree about the *content* of that vision. These disagreements about the preferred form of stateless society are perhaps most often characterised as a disagreement between individualist and collectivist forms of anarchism. These two branches of the anarchist tradition, frequently rather hostile to each other, typically disagree about whether social order in a stateless society requires strong communal ties, or can be the spontaneous result of more individualistic arrangements. Modern commentators often associate collectivist forms of anarchism with some form of socialism, and individualist forms with an enthusiasm for the market.¹⁸ These significant and oft-noted differences about the kinds

¹⁷ For an expansive definition of anarchism that includes, among other considerations, a commitment to a positive social vision, see John P. Clark, "What Is Anarchism?," *Anarchism, NOMOS*, vol. XIX, ed. J. Roland Pennock and John W. Chapman (New York: New York University Press, 1978), 13.

¹⁸ See, for example, the division of anarchism into "socialist" and "free-market" versions in Jan Narveson, "The Anarchist Case," in John T. Sanders and Jan Narveson, eds., *For and Against the State. New Philosophical Readings* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996), 195–216.

of social arrangements that anarchists endorse constitute one of the main factors that make attempts to generalise about the location of anarchism along a single left–right ideological spectrum both contentious and difficult.¹⁹

III

In order to situate Stirner within this account of anarchist commitments, it is necessary to have an accurate understanding of the basic standpoint he adopts in *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*. Stirner advocates an intellectual position that he usually describes as ‘egoism’. However, his elucidation of this position is far from transparent, and critical responses to his work differ in their interpretation of it. In what follows, I provide a brief account of Stirner’s understanding of egoism, before turning to examine the relationship between this conception of egoism and his account of the state.

Commentators frequently identify the concept of egoism in Stirner’s writings with the pursuit of self-interest. He is perhaps most often held to have believed that individuals ought to act in order to maximise their own self-interests, and hence to promote the interests of others only where and insofar as doing so is conducive to their own. In short, Stirner is thought to be committed to the position usually known as ethical egoism.²⁰ (I am interested here not in the coherence of ethical egoism, which has sometimes been questioned, but in whether Stirner subscribes to this doctrine.)

It would be a mistake to deny that this interpretation of Stirner has some textual justification. There are passages in *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* that appear to be written from the standpoint of ethical egoism. However, Stirnerian egoism is not primarily an endorsement of a normative proposition about the value of self-interested action as conventionally understood. Despite his occasional use of the vocabulary of ethical egoism, Stirnerian egoism should be distinguished from the individual pursuit of self-interest. Note, in particular, that Stirner is often critical of self-interested action *simpliciter*. He refuses, for example, to endorse

¹⁹ David Miller suggests that it is a mistake to think of anarchism as an ideology; it is rather “the point of intersection of several ideologies.” David Miller, *Anarchism* (London: Dent, 1984), 3.

²⁰ For attributions of ethical egoism to Stirner, see Alan Ritter, *Anarchism. A Theoretical Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 6; and George Crowder, “Anarchism,” in Edward Craig, ed., *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2000), vol. 1, 245.

what, at one point in *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, he calls egoism 'in the usual sense' – that is, the 'sober' and 'calculating' motivation of 'selfish people, looking out for their advantage'.²¹

Stirner's reasons for rejecting what I shall call ordinary egoism are instructive, and they emerge clearly from his critical response to a work by his Left Hegelian contemporary Bruno Bauer (1809–82). In the first instalment of the two-part *Die Septembertage 1792 und die ersten Kämpfe der Parteien der Republik in Frankreich* (1844), Bauer had identified the modern middle classes as exemplifying the ordinary egoistic attitude to life, and then bemoaned this bourgeois failure to be more 'self-sacrificing'. In his critical response, Stirner agrees with Bauer's description of the affinity between ordinary egoism and the modern middle classes but *inverts* Bauer's complaint: The real problem with the modern middle classes is that their egoism is too (rather than insufficiently) self-sacrificing. That is, Stirner condemns egoism in the conventional sense as a form of heteronomy, observing that individuals can sacrifice their self-determination to 'petty' as well as 'idealistic' passions.²² In this crucial respect, he maintains that the 'Mammon of the earth' is exactly like the 'God of heaven', in that 'both demand exactly the same degree of – self-renunciation'.²³ Avaricious individuals who devote themselves single-mindedly to the pursuit of material gain are clearly self-interested (they act only to enrich themselves), but this ordinary egoism, because it embodies a subjugation of the individual to a single inauthentic end, is incompatible with egoism properly understood. On Stirner's account, the avaricious individual is 'driven by the thirst for money'; he does not live his own life but is rather dragged along by this appetite. The avaricious individual is said to be 'not a self-owned man, but a servant'; he 'belongs to' and is a 'slave of' filthy lucre.²⁴ In short, far from endorsing ordinary egoism as a normative guide to individual behaviour, Stirner rejects conventional self-interestedness as 'a one-sided, unopened, narrow egoism' that might better be called 'possessedness'.²⁵

²¹ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 81 (70). References to the text of *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* are to two editions: the first page reference is to Max Stirner, *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, mit einem Nachwort herausgegeben von Ahlrich Meyer (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1972); and the second (bracketed) reference is to Max Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*, edited with an introduction by David Leopold (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

²² *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 81–2 (70).

²³ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 64 (57).

²⁴ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 335 (266).

²⁵ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 82 (70).

As these remarks might suggest, Stirner's ideal is best thought of not in terms of the pursuit of self-interest, but rather as a species of self-mastery or individual autonomy. Egoism, properly understood, is to be identified with what Stirner calls 'ownness [*Eigenheit*]', a type of autonomy that is incompatible with any suspension of individual judgement (whether voluntary or forced). 'I am my *own*', Stirner writes, 'only when I am master of myself, instead of being mastered . . . by anything else'.²⁶ This egoistic ideal of self-mastery has both external and internal dimensions. Self-owning individuals must not only avoid subjugating their will to that of another but must also avoid being 'dragged along' by their own appetites.²⁷

This alternative interpretation – according to which egoism properly understood is concerned with self-mastery rather than with self-interest – is confirmed by Stirner's examples and elaborations of egoism in *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*. Thus, in a characteristically provocative conceit, Stirner occasionally describes God as a paradigmatic egoist. However, God is not characterised as an egoist because He is conventionally self-interested (I take it that God is not an ordinary egoist) but rather because He 'serves no higher person' and 'acts only from himself'.²⁸ Similarly, when Stirner reaches for a contrast in order to elucidate the nature of egoism, he contrasts egoism not with altruism or some related concept (such as generosity or philanthropy) but rather with individual subjugation in either its external or internal forms. I am said to deny the 'ownness' at the heart of egoism not when I act generously but when 'I give myself up, give way, desist, submit' to another.²⁹ In addition, the condition in which individuals are enslaved to one of their desires is characterised as '*not egoism*, but thralldom, service, self-renunciation'.³⁰

Two features of Stirner's position in *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* emerge as fundamental. In the first place, he views egoism properly understood as of overriding value. He is not prepared to countenance any tradeoff between individual self-mastery and other goods; the sacrifice of individual self-mastery is never justified, even where that sacrifice might be necessary in order to achieve some other benefit. In the second place, Stirner interprets individual self-mastery in an idiosyncratic and

²⁶ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 187 (153).

²⁷ See *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 64 (56).

²⁸ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 4 (6) and 178 (146).

²⁹ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 183 (150).

³⁰ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 182 (149).

stringent manner. Many accounts of self-mastery allow individuals to be subject to the will of others, or devoted to a single goal, and yet still count as autonomous. What matters, according to these alternative accounts, is not the mere fact of subjugation but rather how that subjugation came about (for example, whether it was generated by the meaningful consent of the individual). Stirnerian egoism, however, is incompatible with any such subjugation. Even self-assumed obligations are deemed illegitimate, because they conflict with the model of self-mastery at the heart of the concept of egoism properly understood (Stirner thereby rejects perhaps the most familiar way of reconciling individual autonomy with the existence of binding obligations, namely through contract and consent).

IV

I turn now from the interpretation of the basic standpoint adopted in *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* to examine the ramifications of egoism properly understood for Stirner's account of the state. I am concerned, in particular, to locate Stirner within the typology of core anarchist beliefs outlined previously.

Stirner's hostility towards the state is such that he can plausibly be interpreted as endorsing the minimal negative core of anarchist doctrine with little straining. He repeatedly portrays the state as a repressive and illegitimate institution, on the grounds that its 'sole purpose' is 'to limit, tame, subordinate the individual'.³¹ This basic picture is reiterated in a bewildering variety of images. (Stirner's idiosyncratic rejection of both conventional meanings and received forms of philosophical argumentation ensures that images and metaphor always play an important role in the presentation of his views in *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*.) The state is variously described as: a collection of 'snares and nets' set for the individual to run into³²; a 'machine' directing the 'clockwork' of individual minds 'none of which follow their own impulse'³³; the 'devil' demanding that the individual pledge his very soul to it³⁴; a stern father ('Papa State') keen to discipline his 'children'³⁵; the 'king of beasts' waiting to turn against the individual 'with all the force of its 'lion-paws' and

³¹ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 249 (201).

³² *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 245 (198).

³³ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 250 (201).

³⁴ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 345 (273).

³⁵ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 219 (178).

‘eagle-claws’³⁶; and a jealous ‘God’ who, requiring faith and prescribing behaviour, dominates and ‘drives away’ the individual’s own spirit.³⁷

The common thread running through these disparate images is an account of the state as a powerful enemy of the individual. This antipathy between state and individual is portrayed as both basic and resistant to mediation. Stirner maintains not only that ‘we two, the state and I, are enemies’, but also that these two protagonists are irreconcilable.³⁸ In the unfolding historical relationship between the state and the individual, he elaborates, there are only two alternatives: ‘it or I’.³⁹ Moreover, for reasons discussed in more detail below, Stirner insists that this repression of the individual by the state is never justified. All states are ‘despots’ that seek to make a ‘slave’ of the individual, and such slavery can never be legitimate.⁴⁰ ‘No one’, Stirner claims, ‘has any business to command *my* actions, to say what course I shall pursue and set up a code to govern it’.⁴¹

Note that although Stirner condemns all states as despotisms that enslave the individual, he does not fail to discriminate between different state forms. In particular, he acknowledges that there are differences in the degree of despotism that different types of state exercise over the individual. His elaboration of this apparently innocent claim is both provocative and noteworthy. Stirner deems the modern state to be more despotic than its predecessors. He maintains that the French Revolution, rather than embodying a transition from absolute to limited government, actually ‘effected the transformation of *limited monarchy* into *absolute monarchy*’.⁴² The moderns may be ‘zealots’ for reason rather than faith, but their enthusiasm for playing the ‘guardian’ over the individual, Stirner insists, is at least as great as that of ‘the most absolute rulers’ of feudalism. Moreover, the means at the disposal of the moderns in the pursuit of that paternalism are much greater.⁴³ Under feudalism the individual was separated from the state by a series of intermediaries (corporations, nobility, cities, church, and so on) whose privileges were subsequently removed by the Revolution. These feudal intermediaries had functioned

³⁶ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 282 (226).

³⁷ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 345 (273).

³⁸ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 196 (161).

³⁹ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 284 (227).

⁴⁰ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 117 (97).

⁴¹ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 214 (174).

⁴² *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 111 (92). Stirner’s comments on the French Revolution are intended to parallel his account of the Reformation, because he maintains that political liberty is a phase of Protestantism.

⁴³ See *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 116 (96).

as countervailing powers, as limits on the power of the monarch. In stark contrast, the new sovereign, the modern state, was no longer constrained by 'a thousand little lords'.⁴⁴ Indeed, Stirner suggests that, in this way, the bourgeoisie had finally realised the dream of absolutists throughout the centuries, namely 'to find that absolute lord beside whom no other lords and lordlings any longer exist to clip his power'.⁴⁵

Note that the attempt to direct and control the individual is, on Stirner's account, a necessary rather than a contingent aspect of the behaviour of states.⁴⁶ His hostility is targeted at what he understands as an essential characteristic of any state, namely the claim to possess 'sovereignty' (ultimate authority) over individuals.⁴⁷ Sovereignty necessarily requires the subordination of the individual to an alien will, and such subordination is never justified on Stirner's account. 'The state', he maintains, 'cannot forebear the claim to determine the individual's will, to speculate and count on this. For the state it is indispensable that nobody have an *own will*'.⁴⁸ However, this claim to bind the individual falls foul of Stirner's insistence that 'no one has any business to command *my* actions, to say what course I shall pursue and set up a code to govern it'.⁴⁹ The state cannot forgo the claim to bind the actions of individuals, and yet egoism properly understood rules out any legitimate subjugation of the individual (no matter how that subjugation was arrived at). There is, in short, a necessary conflict, on Stirner's account, between individual self-mastery and the obligation to obey the law. 'I', he insists, 'am free in *no* state'.⁵⁰ Moreover, because individual self-mastery trumps any competing consideration, Stirner concludes that the demands of the state are not binding on the individual. In terms of the typology discussed above, Stirner is thus best characterised as an *a priori* anarchist.

This characterisation is consistent with Stirner's own description of his position. He is, for example, critical of those authors who 'fill whole folios on the state without calling in question the fixed idea of the state itself'.⁵¹ In particular, his Left Hegelian contemporaries are chastised because, although they feel few scruples about 'revolting against the existing state

⁴⁴ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 111 (92).

⁴⁵ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 111 (92).

⁴⁶ See *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, pp. 214–15 (175).

⁴⁷ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 204 (166).

⁴⁸ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 214 (174).

⁴⁹ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 214 (174).

⁵⁰ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 249 (201).

⁵¹ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 47 (44).

or overturning existing laws', they do not dare 'to sin against the *idea* of the state' or to resist 'the *idea* of law'.⁵² Stirner's rejection of political obligation stands irrespective of its purported foundation, and whatever the form of the state. The attempt to bind the individual – whether it takes the form of 'sultan law in the sultanate, popular law in republics, canon law in Catholic communities' – is never justified.⁵³ 'Every state is a despotism', he maintains, 'be the despot one or many'.⁵⁴

Stirner is sceptical of contemporary attempts to avoid this conclusion. For example, in discussing *Die liberalen Bestrebungen in Deutschland* (1843), a Left Hegelian work in which Bruno's brother Edgar Bauer (1820–86) had argued that in a 'people's state' the government would no longer exist, being replaced by an executive authority, Stirner doubts whether this verbal distinction captures any significant difference.⁵⁵ 'The thing', he insists, 'remains the same'; sovereignty is still exercised over the individual.⁵⁶ Stirner concludes that 'Edgar Bauer's whole attempt comes to a *change of masters*', and he recommends that, instead of wanting to make the *people* free, Edgar Bauer 'should have had his mind on the sole realisable freedom, his own'.⁵⁷ On Stirner's account, of course, the genuine freedom of the individual is incompatible with any obligation to obey the law. Even in the hypothetical case of a direct democracy in which a collective decision was made unanimously by all citizens, Stirner denies that the egoist would be bound by the result. To be bound today by 'my will of yesterday', he argues, would be to turn my 'creature', that is 'a particular expression of will', into my 'commander'; it would be to freeze my will, and Stirner denies that 'because I was a fool yesterday I must remain such'.⁵⁸ For the egoist, there are no legitimate constraints on the future actions of self-determining individuals.

Thus far, I have identified Stirner as an *a priori* anarchist – that is, as maintaining that some essential feature of the state (its claim to possess sovereignty) makes it impossible for something to be both a state and legitimate (because egoism recognises no legitimate constraints on

⁵² *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 94 (80). See also the contemporary characterization of Stirner, by Edgar Bauer and Friedrich Engels, quoted in the epigraph to the present study.

⁵³ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 205 (167).

⁵⁴ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 215 (175).

⁵⁵ See *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 250 (202).

⁵⁶ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 250 (202).

⁵⁷ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 252 (204).

⁵⁸ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 215 (175).

autonomous individuals). However, it still remains to consider whether Stirner is best classified as a *strong* or a *weak* anarchist. In this context, it is necessary to ascertain whether he subscribes to the view that individuals have a positive duty to oppose, and attempt to eliminate (insofar as this is within their power), the state.

Strong anarchism looks likely to fall foul of Stirner's general suspicion of political movements. The claim that individuals are morally bound to oppose a social evil would appear liable to attract the scorn that Stirner directs at 'plans for the redemption or improvement of the world'.⁵⁹ Egoism, he maintains, rejects any notion of idealistic devotion to 'a great idea, a good cause, a doctrine, a system, a lofty calling'.⁶⁰ The egoist is said to recognise no political 'calling' but rather simply 'lives himself out' without a care for 'how well or ill humanity may fare thereby'.⁶¹ More important, there is a direct conflict between egoism properly understood and strong anarchism. At the heart of the latter is a duty, a moral requirement to act in a particular fashion – namely, to oppose, and attempt to eliminate, the state. However, on Stirner's account, as we have already seen, the egoist recognises 'no *duty*', no binding constraints on his autonomy.⁶² In short, Stirner's rejection of 'the standpoint of *should* [*Sollens*]' would seem decisive, and the egoist could never endorse the notion of a duty that is central to strong anarchism.⁶³

As well as these reasons for thinking that Stirner would reject strong anarchism, there is some evidence that he endorses weak anarchism. Note that, although the weak anarchist can never act in a particular way because it is required by law, he can act in the way required by law for some independent (moral or prudential) reason. The weak anarchist denies being under any general obligation either to obey or to disobey the law, but rather decides in each particular case whether or not to go along with the demands of the state. This seems close to Stirner's own attitude. He accepts that there can exist a happy coincidence between the well-being of the egoist and the particular actions or behaviour demanded by social institutions. In a discussion of the distinction between my own good and the good of my family, for example, he observes that 'in innumerable cases both go peacefully together'.⁶⁴ This same happy coincidence can

⁵⁹ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 28 (29).

⁶⁰ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 82 (70).

⁶¹ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 410–411 (323).

⁶² *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 215 (175).

⁶³ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 268 (215).

⁶⁴ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 242 (196).

run between the actions of the individual egoist and the demands of the state. In such circumstances (rather than being required to mount an attack on the state), the egoist simply pursues his own goals without, of course, being bound to do so by any general obligation to obey the law. Stirner maintains that ‘only when the state comes in contact with his ownness does the egoist take an active interest in it’.⁶⁵

It is only in these latter cases – namely, where there is a conflict between the autonomy of the egoist and the demands of the state – that Stirner recommends resisting the requirements of law. As Stirner puts it: ‘the egoist, *in all cases where his advantage runs against the state’s*, can satisfy himself only by crime’.⁶⁶ Even in these cases of conflict, the egoist is properly concerned only with the pursuit of his own cause and not with the defeat of the state as such. In order to illustrate the proper attitude of the egoist towards the state, Stirner alludes to the purported response of Diogenes of Sinope (c.412/403–c.324/321 BCE), the most notorious of the Cynic sect, to Alexander ‘the Great’ (356–323 BCE): ‘So long as the state does according to his wish’, Stirner asks rhetorically, ‘what need has [the egoist] to look up’; and when the state and the egoist come into conflict, the egoist ‘has nothing to say to the state except “Get out of my sunshine”’.⁶⁷ In short, Stirner does not recommend that individuals pursue a frontal assault on the state but rather suggests that, in circumstances where the demands of the state conflict with his autonomous choices, the egoist should seek to evade its constraints in order to return to his own authentic pursuits. In this context, it is also appropriate to recall that Stirner’s classical hero was Alcibiades (c.450–404 BCE), the ‘intriguer of genius’, who, among other infamies, fled Athens rather than face a trial when he was suspected of complicity in the mutilation of the Hermae.⁶⁸ Alcibiades escaped to Sparta, where he dispensed military advice to

⁶⁵ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 258 (208).

⁶⁶ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 263 (212). Emphasis added.

⁶⁷ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 257 (208). For the original story (“Diogenes was a Greek philosopher who lived in a tub; one day he was sunning himself when Alexander the Great, smitten by desire to see the great philosopher, approached and asked if there was anything he could do for him, to which Diogenes responded: “Get out of my light!”), see Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, V. 92. Several affinities can be drawn between Stirner and Diogenes. They include an unorthodox rhetoric, an attack on law and convention, the rejection of political institutions, and an apparent disdain for humanity in general. On Diogenes, see, for example, John Moles, “The Cynics,” in Christopher Rowe and Malcolm Schofield, eds., *Greek and Roman Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 415–33.

⁶⁸ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 236 (191).

his former enemies while engineering a subsequent return to Athens. Alcibiades is scarcely to be described accurately as a concerted and consistent opponent of the Athenian (or any other) state; he was rather an individual who, on occasion, came into conflict with, and did not feel constrained by, the demands of its citizenry.⁶⁹ Stirner contrasts the example of Alcibiades – who broke with the ancient prejudice that individuals were free only if, and to the extent that, they were members of a free community – with that of Socrates (469–399 BCE). The latter is dismissed as a ‘fool’ for conceding to the Athenians the right to condemn him, and his refusal to escape (or, earlier, to request banishment) is portrayed as a ‘weakness’, a product of his delusion that he was a member of a community rather than an individual.⁷⁰

It is important to note that although Stirner rejects the view that individuals have a duty to overthrow the state (and is thus best characterised as a weak rather than a strong anarchist), he does appear to hold that the state would be undermined by the rejection of the obligation to obey the law. Individuals might not have a duty to overthrow it, but the state will still eventually collapse as a result of the spread of egoism.

This surprising conclusion is generated by what might be called Stirner's idealist sociology. The state, he suggests, is based on the idea of sovereignty and is held together by the deference of individuals to its commands. It is ‘respect for the law’ that, on this account, forms the ‘cement’ by which ‘the state is held together’.⁷¹ Stirner's characterisation of this relation between the individual and the state alludes, in its choice of vocabulary, to the dialectic of *Herrschaft* and *Knechtschaft* in the *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807) of G.W.F. Hegel (1770–1831). Stirner insists that ‘he who, to hold his own, must count on the absence of will in others is a thing made by these others, as the master is a thing made by the servant. If submissiveness ceased, it would be all over with lordship’.⁷² In this way, Stirner promotes what is, in Hegel's work, one part of a wider story (the moment of ‘recognition’ in relations of domination) into a complete account of the sources of state power. At one point, Stirner

⁶⁹ This is not, of course, the only possible interpretation of these events in Alcibiades' life. Thucydides, for example, portrays Alcibiades' return to Athens – and his success in persuading the Athenians at Samos not to sail against Athens, thereby abandoning the Aegean to their enemies – as the point at which Alcibiades finally performed a service for his *polis* (rather than for himself).

⁷⁰ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 235 (190–1).

⁷¹ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 263 (212).

⁷² *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 214 (175).

describes the power of law as 'imaginary', like the power of God as conceptualised by his fellow Left Hegelians.⁷³ It is a characterisation that he adopts presumably because he thinks the power of the state would be undermined by a change in the beliefs held by his contemporaries. If, as Stirner believes, the state exists only because of 'the disrespect that I have for myself', then there is reason to conclude that 'with the vanishing of this undervaluation' the state itself will be 'extinguished'.⁷⁴ Indeed, he suggests that the cumulative effect of a growing egoistic disrespect for law would be to 'scuttle [*anbohren*]' (literally, to drill holes into) 'the ship of state [*Staatsschiff*]'.⁷⁵

The distinction that Stirner draws between 'revolution [*Revolution*]', which the egoist is to reject, and 'insurrection [*Empörung*]', which he is to embrace, is also of relevance in the present context. These two modes of action differ in both their motivation and their goal.⁷⁶ Whereas revolutionary activity is motivated by a discontent with the existing state or society and aimed at 'overturning' those established conditions, insurrectionary activity is motivated by the 'discontent' of individuals 'with themselves' and is aimed at no longer letting 'ourselves be arranged'.⁷⁷ Unlike the revolutionary impulse, insurrection does not aim at 'new arrangements' and 'sets no glittering hopes on "institutions"'.⁷⁸ Stirner makes a provocative appeal to the example of Jesus in order to clarify the insurrectionary attitude. Jesus is said to have been an insurgent rather than a revolutionary; 'not a state-overturner, but one who straightened *himself up*'.⁷⁹ On this account, Jesus was not interested in pursuing a political fight with the temporal powers but rather 'wanted to walk his *own* way, untroubled about, and undisturbed by, these authorities'.⁸⁰ One of the lessons that Stirner draws from this example is that the efficacy of insurrection should not be underestimated. Just as the insurgency of Jesus destroyed the ancient 'heathen order', so too contemporary insurgency might undermine the modern Christian order.⁸¹ (The

⁷³ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 226 (184).

⁷⁴ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 316 (252).

⁷⁵ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 61 (54).

⁷⁶ Herbert Read's account of the distinction identifies the difference in aims but not in motivation. See Herbert Read, *Anarchy and Order. Essays in Politics* (London: Souvenir Press, 1974), 51.

⁷⁷ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 354 (p. 279–80).

⁷⁸ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 354 (280).

⁷⁹ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 355 (281).

⁸⁰ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 355–6 (281).

⁸¹ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 356 (281).

presumption implicit in this elision of Stirner's own historical role with that of Jesus will be readily apparent.)

V

Thus far, I have been concerned with the core beliefs of anarchism, beliefs I have characterised as minimal and negative. It is the rejection of the legitimacy of the state in *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* that marks the essential anarchist thread in Stirner's thought. More precisely, Stirner maintains that the state is necessarily illegitimate, but he rejects the suggestion that individuals have a duty to oppose, and attempt to eliminate, it. In short, in terms of the typology considered earlier, Stirner should be classified as an *a priori* weak anarchist. However, even a cursory reading of *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* reveals: first, that, whether or not anarchists are required to do so, Stirner also possesses a positive vision of a stateless society; and second, that this positive social vision is situated on the individualist branch of the anarchist tradition.⁸² Questions remain, however, about both the character and appeal of Stirner's positive vision. I begin with the first of these two issues.

In the second part of *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, Stirner contrasts the relationships of 'belonging' that are characteristic of established society with the relationships of 'uniting' that are characteristic of the social arrangements of an alternative 'egoistic' order. In each case, his account is concerned with the impact of these different kinds of relationship on the self-mastery of the individual. Relationships of 'belonging' are said to involve ties that *bind* the individual. Existing social institutions (including the family, party, and state) are portrayed as illegitimately constraining and subjugating the autonomous agent. In all these cases, the illegitimate constraint arises out of the incompatibility between egoism and the duties that are said to attach to membership in these institutions. The egoist, Stirner insists, remains 'the irreconcilable enemy of . . . every *tie*, every *fetter*'.⁸³ (That certain relationships of belonging might also be fulfilling – ties can, of course, not only bind but also provide security or a locus of self-identity – is a possibility that Stirner never seriously considers.) In contrast, relationships of 'uniting' are said to avoid this

⁸² Not all commentators agree. For an apparent denial that Stirner's work includes a positive social vision, see David Weir, *Anarchy and Culture. The Aesthetic Politics of Modernism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 155 and 170–1.

⁸³ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 237 (192).

conflict with the self-mastery of the individual. Stirner offers an ideal typical description of these latter relationships in his account of the ‘union of egoists [*Verein von Egoisten*]’.⁸⁴ This union of egoists is portrayed as a nexus of impermanent connections between individuals who themselves remain independent and self-determining. It constitutes a wholly instrumental association whose good is solely the advantages that the individuals involved may derive from the pursuit of their individual goals (there are no shared final ends, and the association is not valued in itself). The central feature of the union of egoists is that it is a form of association which does not conflict with individual autonomy; it constitutes a constantly shifting alliance which enables individuals to unite without loss of sovereignty, without swearing allegiance to anyone else’s ‘flag’.⁸⁵

Stirner makes two claims about the relationship between the state and the union of egoists. First, as will be apparent, they are based on fundamentally different principles. Whereas the state ‘is an enemy and murderer of *ownness*’, the union of egoists is ‘a son and co-worker of it’.⁸⁶ Second, the state and the union of egoists are portrayed as competing forms of social organisation. Indeed, in a discussion of the desirability of undermining the state, Stirner explicitly portrays the union of egoists as what individuals might ‘form in its place’.⁸⁷ In short, and as we would expect of an anarchist, Stirner’s positive vision is of a stateless society.

In elaborating this positive social vision, Stirner often describes his model of egoistic relationships in terms of property relations. The egoist is said to stand in a relation of ‘ownership’ to the wider world (including, of course, other persons). Stirner’s vocabulary at this point is open to significant misunderstanding, perhaps especially by modern readers used to identifying ‘individualist’ with ‘free-market’ variants of anarchism. Stirner’s notion of ‘egoistic property’, however, is not to be confused with more familiar juridical concepts of ownership (such as private property or collective ownership). Not least, these more familiar forms of property rest on notions of right and involve claims to exclusivity, or constraints on use, that Stirner rejects. Egoistic property is rather constituted by what Stirner calls the ‘*unlimited dominion*’ of individuals over the world, by which he appears to mean the absence of moral constraints on how an individual might relate to things and other persons.⁸⁸ Egoists are said

⁸⁴ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 196 (161).

⁸⁵ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 261 (210).

⁸⁶ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 344 (273).

⁸⁷ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 196 (161).

⁸⁸ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 279 (223).

to 'have only one relation to each other, that of *usableness*, of utility, of use'.⁸⁹ At one point, Stirner describes the perspective of the egoist as one in which others are viewed as 'nothing but – my food, even as I too am fed upon and turned to use by you'.⁹⁰

In elaborating this egoistic attitude to the world, Stirner seems to be pulled in two rather different directions. In the first, and least typical, of these moods, he shies away somewhat from the suggestion that his views might have radical consequences. In *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, for example, Stirner occasionally promotes the suggestion that many familiar and worthwhile relationships might continue to exist once social relations were reconstructed on egoistic lines. Thus, for example, he maintains that love – in the form of a 'lively interest' in the 'joy' and 'weal' of another – would survive in an association of egoistic individuals.⁹¹ The same accommodating tone is struck in his article '*Rezensenten Stirners*' (1845), in which Stirner defends the egoism of *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* against three contemporary Left Hegelian critics: Moses Hess (1812–75), Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–72), and 'Szeliga' – the pseudonym of Franz Zychlin von Zychlinsky (1816–1900), a Prussian officer and sometime contributor to periodicals published by Bruno Bauer in the mid-1840s. In remarks addressed primarily to the first of these critics, Stirner provides as examples of egoistic unions some innocuous everyday gatherings of friends, including a group of children running together past his window in the 'comradeship of play [*Spielkameradschaft*]', and the spontaneous decision by Hess and some of his Berlin companions on meeting in the street to decamp to a nearby bar.⁹²

In the second, and predominant, of these moods, Stirner acknowledges that an egoistic order is likely to issue in more radical and unfamiliar consequences. Indeed, at times, he appears to revel in the suggestion that his views could have shocking practical results. (This is one of the sources of the melodramatic tone of much of *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*.) Stirner maintains that in an egoistic association the individual has no moral duties or obligations towards others and does not renounce 'even the power over life and death'.⁹³ Over the course of the book, he variously condones the actions of the officer's widow who strangles her

⁸⁹ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 331 (263).

⁹⁰ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 331 (263).

⁹¹ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 323 (257).

⁹² 'Recensenten Stirners', Max Stirner, *Kleinere Schriften* (Berlin: Bernhard Zack, 1914), 396.

⁹³ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 357 (282).

child,⁹⁴ the man who treats his sister 'as wife also',⁹⁵ and the murderer who no longer fears his act as a 'wrong'.⁹⁶ In an egoistic social order in which 'we owe *each other* nothing', it seems that acts of infanticide, incest, and murder might all turn out to be justified.⁹⁷

In order to discuss the appeal of Stirner's positive social vision (the issue that constitutes the second of the tasks mentioned above), it seems necessary to determine which of these two rather different accounts better captures the nature of the egoistic union.

There seems good reason to doubt the continuity account (according to which the reconstruction of society on egoistic lines would preserve much that was familiar and worthwhile from the present). Take Stirner's own example of 'love'. In elaborating the claim that love would survive being transplanted onto egoistic foundations, it becomes clear that what we might call egoistic love involves no sacrifice of autonomy and that its object remains the egoist himself. The egoist is concerned about the 'joy' and 'weal' of another only because, and to the extent that, his own happiness is enhanced as a result. The egoist 'loves' only when, and as long as, 'love makes *me* happy'.⁹⁸ The set of phenomena that get included under the category of love are, no doubt, rather diverse, and it may be that no single model can make sense of all of them. However, Stirner's occasionally conciliatory tone appears misleading. It is clear that much of what is involved in our current understanding and experience of love would not survive this egoistic reformulation. Two brief points might be made in this context. In the first place, Stirner seems to treat love as a matter of free choice; once he is no longer getting sufficient benefits from the object of his caring, the egoist simply replaces that object with another. However, it is far from clear that the bond between lovers and the object of their affections is flexible in this way. The concern for another person at the heart of our understanding and experience of love does not appear to be something that we can simply choose whether or not to have. Second, it seems to be a mistake to think of love as based upon self-interest, or indeed any instrumental concern. Love is not necessarily motivated by the anticipated benefits for oneself of either the object, or the experience, of love. It rather includes a commitment to serve the interests and ends of the object of our love apart from its consequences for our own

⁹⁴ See *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 356 (281).

⁹⁵ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 48 (45).

⁹⁶ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 208 (169).

⁹⁷ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 331 (263).

⁹⁸ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 324 (258).

well-being. Indeed, love can occasionally require us to jeopardise or sacrifice our own well-being (in real life as well as in bad novels). This is part of what has been meant by the 'selfless' or 'disinterested' character of love.⁹⁹ That these two central features of our understanding and experience of love would not survive the reconstruction of our social life on egoistic lines suggests that the continuity account may be misleading.

It is the *discontinuity* account that seems to capture better the nature of the egoistic union. On this somewhat bleaker reading, the reorganisation of society on egoistic lines would have radical and unfamiliar consequences. Indeed, it is no easy matter to imagine what this wholly egoistic world would look like. Many familiar social institutions would disappear (from the family to the state), and individuals would no longer be subject to the constraints of obligation and duty towards others (constraints that fall foul of Stirner's ideal of self-mastery). Even murder would be permissible provided only that 'it is right for me [*ist es Mir recht*]' (a more colloquial translation might render the qualification: provided 'it suits me' to murder).¹⁰⁰ Two possible responses to this positive social vision might be mentioned here.

Perhaps the most obvious initial reaction to this vision is one of abhorrence. Many will find the idea of a social world in which I may 'think and act as I will', utilising others as I choose, a repugnant one.¹⁰¹ This reaction is not obviously mistaken, but I do not want to belabour it here. Not least, it is a predictable response that left Stirner himself unmoved. He acknowledges that 'very few' of his contemporary readers would 'draw joy' from his vision of a world without duties or obligations towards others but expresses indifference at this response (which he seems to have viewed as reflecting the emotional pull of conventional ideas that have, on reflection, to be abandoned in the interests of self-mastery).¹⁰² Indeed, Stirner maintains that the 'trouble, combat, and death' that could result from the publication of *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* (presumably from the consequent spread of egoism) are of no concern to him.¹⁰³

A second, and perhaps less obvious, reaction to this positive social vision is to doubt its coherence. Stirner insists that the egoistic alternative

⁹⁹ On the 'disinterested' character of certain kinds of love, see Harry G. Frankfurt, "On Caring," in Harry G. Frankfurt, *Necessity, Volition, and Love* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 165 ff.

¹⁰⁰ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 208 (170).

¹⁰¹ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 233 (189).

¹⁰² *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 331 (263).

¹⁰³ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 331 (263).

to established society involves not isolation but relationships of *uniting*. There appears to be a recognition here that some form of cooperation is necessary in order to facilitate the goals of individuals. However, there is good reason to doubt whether it is possible to establish and sustain cooperation on egoistic premises. It is increasingly recognised – not least, as a result of the continuing academic popularity of economic and game-theoretic models of individual interaction – that cooperation is a complex and fragile achievement. In particular, it is widely understood that the fact that cooperation may be in everyone's interests (or is what everyone would prefer) does not, in itself, guarantee that it will occur. In addition, cooperation is often thought to require either trust or coercion for its successful implementation. However, both of these solutions appear to be fraught with difficulties for the egoist. Stirner could not, with any consistency, introduce coercion in order to ensure cooperation between individuals. After all, if the union of egoists can be sustained only with the help of coercion, then that union could only implausibly be described as the friend and ally of individual autonomy (at least, on Stirner's own account of the latter). Nor is it obvious that Stirner can rely on trust to solve this problem of cooperation. The role of trust in securing social cooperation between autonomous individuals is both fundamental and difficult to understand. Trusting other people involves an expectation about their behaviour; essentially I have to believe that when offered the chance you are unlikely to behave in a way that is damaging to me.¹⁰⁴ This is not merely a question of predictability but also of normative expectations that appear to be deeply implicated with various social norms.¹⁰⁵ (I expect you to meet me as arranged, not merely because I have previously observed that you tend to be on time, but also because courtesy demands it or because you have earlier agreed to do so.) However, it is far from clear that egoistic individuals can sustain trust to the degree necessary for their successful cooperation. Interestingly, Stirner recognises, at least in part, the corrosive impact of egoism on trust. For example, he accepts that the institution of promising would be an early victim of his commitment to, and understanding of, individual autonomy. For Stirner, promising is always associated with illegitimate constraint, because the requirement that duly made promises be kept is incompatible with

¹⁰⁴ See Diego Gambetta, ed., *Trust. Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988).

¹⁰⁵ See Martin Hollis, *Trust Within Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 10–14.

'ownness'. The egoist must, he suggests, embrace the heroism of the lie and be willing to break his word 'in order to determine himself instead of being determined'.¹⁰⁶ What Stirner does not adequately consider is whether egoistic individuals whose word cannot be trusted could rely on each other (in other than the weak predictive sense that they could be relied upon to be unreliable) to the extent necessary to facilitate their *union*. In short, we might doubt whether it is possible to establish and sustain the union (that is the successful cooperation) of egoists when 'ownness permits everything, even apostasy, defection'.¹⁰⁷

VI

In the present paper, I have been concerned with the proper characterisation of Stirner's thought, and not with the historical impact of his writings. More especially, I have sought to demonstrate that the popular characterisation of Stirner as an anarchist is a plausible one. Whatever other beliefs he may hold, and whatever the plausibility of other characterisations of his work, Stirner does subscribe to the core anarchist claim that the state is illegitimate. More precisely, he holds both that the state is necessarily illegitimate and that individuals are not under an obligation to oppose, and attempt to eliminate, it. That is, in terms of the typology considered earlier, Stirner should be classified as an *a priori* weak anarchist. In addition, he subscribes to what I have characterised as the peripheral anarchist belief in a positive social vision. Stirner's own positive vision is clearly situated on the individualist branch of the anarchist tradition. In elaborating this vision, however, he appears to be pulled in two rather different directions: suggesting variously that a new egoistic order would be continuous with, and a striking departure from, the social arrangements of the present. I maintained that it is the latter (radical discontinuity) account that better captures his distinctive vision of a social world in which individuals have no obligations or duties towards others. Moreover, in broaching the question of how to respond to this account of his vision, I have suggested that both the desirability and feasibility of Stirner's egoistic union are open to doubt.

¹⁰⁶ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 261 (210).

¹⁰⁷ *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, 261 (210).

Engels and the Invention of the Catastrophist Conception of the Industrial Revolution

Gareth Stedman Jones

I

Frederick Engels' *Condition of the Working-Class in England* records his twenty-one-month residence in Lancashire and was published in Leipzig in 1845. For at least one century, it has been celebrated as one of the great set-piece descriptions of the horrors of the "industrial revolution."¹ It has also been recognised by urban sociologists and historians as providing in its depiction of Manchester a classic account of the nineteenth-century industrial town. This claim was strongly emphasised by Engels himself at the point where he began his description of Manchester. He wrote of entering

upon that classic soil on which English manufacture has achieved its master-work and from which all labour movements emanate... In Lancashire and especially Manchester, English manufacture finds at once its starting-point and its centre... The modern art of manufacture has reached its perfection in Manchester... The effects of modern manufacture upon the working class must necessarily develop here most freely and perfectly, and the manufacturing proletariat present itself in its fullest classic perfection. The degradation to which the application of steam power, machinery and the division of labour reduce the working man and the attempts of the proletariat to rise above this abasement must likewise be carried to the highest point and with the fullest consciousness. Hence because Manchester is the classic type of a modern manufacturing town,

¹ Frederick Engels, "The Condition of the Working Class in England From Personal Observation and Authentic Sources," in *Karl Marx Frederick Engels Collected Works* [henceforward MECW], vol. 4 (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975), 295–583.

and because I know it as intimately as my own native town, more intimately than most of its residents know it, we shall make a longer stay here!²

It is the evidence of Engels' intimate acquaintance with Manchester that singles out his description from those of so many of his contemporaries. Engels led into this description with a brief account of the neighbouring towns of South Lancashire – Preston, Oldham, Bolton, Stockport.³ The account was competent but unexceptional. The description of filthy rivers, human refuse, cellar dwellings, jerry-built cottages, and stinking courts was similar to that found in Chadwick's famous *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population* of 1842 and to the many horrifying but impersonal descriptions of appalling living conditions produced by medical men in the 1830s and 1840s.⁴ The details presented in these reports were repugnant, but remote; they were not framed by the dramatic, even melodramatic contrast between "middle class" and "proletarian" England that structured Engels' picture of Manchester and that helped to produce its shock effect.

The neighbouring mill towns were composed of an even higher proportion of working-class inhabitants than Manchester, but because they were devoted solely to manufacture, there was no pretence about how their money was made, who their inhabitants were, or how they lived. This was not true of Manchester, the great industrial city of the region with its 400,000 inhabitants. Engels wrote: "The town is peculiarly built, so that a person may live years in it and go in and out daily without coming into contact with a working people's quarter or even with workers, that is, so long as he confines himself to his business or to pleasure walks."⁵ "The finest part of the arrangements is this," Engels continued, "that the members of the money aristocracy can take the shortest road through the middle of the labouring districts to their places of business without ever seeing that they are in the midst of the grimy misery that lurks on the right and the left." An "almost unbroken series of shops . . . suffice to conceal from the eyes of the wealthy men and women of strong stomachs and weak nerves the misery and grime which form the complement of their wealth."⁶ Engels was not the first to note the migration of a commuting

² Engels, "The Condition of the Working Class in England," 344–5.

³ Engels, "The Condition of the Working Class in England," 345–7.

⁴ [E. Chadwick], *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain* (London, 1842); on Manchester see J. P. Kay [later Kay-Shuttleworth], *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes Employed in Cotton Manufacture* (London, 1832).

⁵ MECW, vol. 4, 347.

⁶ MECW, vol. 4, 348–9.

employer class to the outskirts; Jules Faucher had done so in his account of Manchester in the *Revue des deux Mondes* only one year earlier.⁷ But Engels was the first to ponder its social and visual consequences.

Undoubtedly, the *pièce de résistance*, what imprints Engels' account upon the memory, was what came next. Having divided the city into the visible and the invisible, Engels now took his readers behind the shop-lined visual façade to explore "the working people's quarters". When in *Capital* more than twenty years later Marx left the sphere of circulation – the sphere that provided "the free trader *vulgaris*" with his views – for that of "the hidden abode of production" at the end of part two, he was only elaborating the same literary device.⁸

Most powerful was the beginning, an account of the Old Town. It started in Long Millgate, one of the better streets, full of old, dirty, tumbledown houses, "an undisguised working class quarter" because no effort was made to give the appearance of cleanliness. But this street paled into insignificance beside the alleys and courts – the layer upon layer of in-fill which lay behind and "to which access can only be gained by covered passages so narrow that two people cannot pass." Here Engels encountered "dirt and revolting filth, the like of which is not to be found . . . the most horrible dwellings I have until now beheld." Here the full horror of the descriptions already found in the *Sanitary Report* is brought forward with graphic force by the power of a first-hand experience of a visitor from another world. In one court there was a privy without a door, so dirty that inhabitants "can only enter or leave by the court by wading through puddles of stale urine and excrement." Privies like this in the worst parts of the city were shared by more than 200 people.⁹

The climax of this account came when Engels arrived at the heart of the Old Town at Ducie Bridge:

The view from this bridge – mercifully concealed from smaller mortals by a parapet as high as a man – is quite characteristic of the entire district. At the bottom the Irk flows, or rather stagnates. It is a narrow, coal-black stinking river full of filth and garbage which it deposits on the lower-lying bank. In dry weather, an extended series of the most revolting brackish green pools of slime remain standing on this bank, out of whose depth bubbles of miasmatic gases constantly rise

⁷ M. Leon Faucher, *Manchester in 1844, Its Present Condition and Future Prospects* (Manchester, 1844), 26–7. For the French version, see Léon Faucher, *Etudes sur l'Angleterre* (Paris, 1845), I, 264–5.

⁸ Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, part II, in *MECW*, vol. 35, 186.

⁹ *MECW*, vol. 4, 351.

and give forth a stench that is unbearable even on the bridge forty or fifty feet above the level of the water.

... Below Ducie Bridge, on the right, low-lying bank stands a long row of houses and factories. The second house is a roofless ruin, filled with rubble, and the third stands in such a low situation that the ground floor is uninhabitable and is as a result without windows and doors. The background here is formed by the paupers' cemetery and the stations of the railway to Liverpool and Leeds. Behind these is the workhouse, Manchester's "Poor Law Bastille." It is built on a hill, like a citadel, and from behind its high walls and battlements looks down threateningly upon the working class quarter that lies below.¹⁰

From Ducie Bridge, Engels lost himself "in a labyrinth of filthy courts" ... "everywhere heaps of debris, refuse and offal; standing pools for gutters, and a stench which alone would make it impossible for a human being in any degree civilised to live in such a district." He moved forwards across a railway bridge beneath which a court has been uncovered "the filth and horror of which surpasses all the others by far," until he concluded, "enough. The whole side of the Irk is built in this way, a planless, knotted chaos of houses, more or less on the verge of uninhabitableness, whose unclean interiors fully correspond with their filthy external surroundings." From here on through the rest of the Old Town: some of it is in slightly better order, but around every corner, the sight renewed of refuse in the street, pigs, and cellar dwellings. Such, he concluded, was the Old Town – 20 to 30,000 inhabitants of "the first manufacturing city of the world."¹¹

But this was the *Old Town*, according to Manchester manufacturers. Therefore to prove that this was not just the *Old Town* but a product that "belongs to the industrial epoch," Engels goes on to explore the New Town. Here there were more pavements, and courts were better planned. But once again, the backstreet cottages were in appalling condition, back-to-back houses lacked ventilation, cellar dwellings were plentiful, and pigs roamed the refuse heaps. Low-built cottages, although not old, were ruined in ten years. Walls were too thin and construction was poor because of the leasehold system. Proceeding through Ancoats along the river Medlock, one encountered a settlement as bad as any in the Old Town: Little Ireland, where 4,000 inhabitants were crammed twenty apiece into 200 small, dirty cottages amid offal, refuse, effluvia, and pigs.¹²

¹⁰ *MECW*, vol. 4, 351–2.

¹¹ *MECW*, vol. 4, 355.

¹² *MECW*, vol. 4, 361.

After this account of the New Town, Engels wrote in much less detail about Hulme, which was described as “sunk in filth,” and about Salford, where 80,000 inhabitants, crammed into courts and narrow lanes, were seen as worse than Manchester. “Such,” Engels concluded, “are the various working people’s quarters of Manchester as I had occasion to observe them personally during 20 months.” “In a word,” he continued, “we must confess that in the working men’s dwellings of Manchester, no cleanliness, no convenience, and consequently no comfortable family life is possible; that in such dwellings only a physically degenerate race, robbed of all humanity, degraded, reduced morally and physically to bestiality, could feel comfortable and at home.”¹³ After a further description of the inferiority of workers’ food and clothing, Engels ended his account of the working class of the great cities by asserting, “in the best cases a temporarily endurable existence for hard work and good wages”; in the worst cases homelessness and starvation – and everywhere the “average” was nearer to the worst.¹⁴

Engels’ book has long been recognised as a classic, as a virtually unique first-hand account of the horrors of the industrial city, viewed not by the policeman, clergyman, or sanitary reformer but by a bourgeois rebel and socialist; but unique also because the socialist literature of the period contains no comparable account. What, then, made possible Engels’ singular examination of the city? What led him off the main thoroughfares and into the back streets? What drew him to areas avoided or ignored by all except the sanitary police and the odd brave doctor?

Clearly, much of the immediacy and detail of this account can be explained by Engels’ first-hand acquaintance with working-class Manchester – a result of his willingness to defy convention and to form a relationship with Mary Burns, a mill-hand in his father’s factory. But the organisation and principal contention of the book, it will be argued here, certainly owes at least as much to its philosophical starting point: its distinctively Young Hegelian – or more particularly, Feuerbachian – representation of the new industrial world. It was for this reason that Engels was so insistent upon depicting Manchester as the industrial city in its “universality,” as the great living embodiment of “the industrial revolution.”

It will be argued here that by its treatment of Manchester as the paradigmatic city of the “industrial revolution,” Engels’ book – perhaps without

¹³ *MECW*, vol. 4, 364.

¹⁴ *MECW*, vol. 4, 374.

intending it – produced a transformation in the meaning of the term itself. Until Engels wrote, discussion of “the industrial revolution” had largely been confined to France and Belgium and had centred on a discussion of the effects of mechanisation, the factory, and the growth of world trade.¹⁵ The outlook of those who first adopted the term “industrial revolution” had been optimistic. Industrialisation was not a problem but the solution to a problem. The problem, as it surfaced in discussion in France and central Europe after 1815, was pauperism. “Pauperism” referred to a spectrum of real or putative problems, political as much as economic, that had arisen as a consequence of what would now be called “deregulation.” It encompassed a whole sequence of events that stretched from French and Prussian attempts to abolish or remove the monopoly privileges of the guilds, through the redemption or abolition of feudal dues and patrimonial jurisdiction and the creation of a landless class in the countryside through to enclosure, the eviction of Irish peasants, and the supposed adoption of a “*laissez-faire*” policy in Britain. Because of his ambition to depict “the condition of the working class in England” as the instantiation of a single story about “Man,” Engels fused French analysis of industrialisation with material drawn from debates about “pauperism” into a single narrative and chose Manchester as the point in the story at which these two distinct discourses would intersect. By conjoining French conceptions of “*industrie*” and an “industrial revolution” with central European anxieties about “pauperism” and *laissez-faire*, Engels’ book inaugurated what Donald Coleman called a “catastrophist” account of the industrial revolution, which was strongly to shape the subsequent historiography of industrialisation in Britain.

First, then, what made possible the distinctive and original vantage point from which Engels depicted the modern industrial city? One standard answer in the existing interpretative literature is that of Steven Marcus. Marcus’s explanation of what he calls Engels’ “personal motives in choosing to write about the great towns first” is as follows:

He was choosing to write about his own experience: to contend with it, to exploit it, to clarify it, and in some literal sense to create it and thereby himself. For in transforming his experiences into language he was at once both generating and discovering their structure.¹⁶

¹⁵ See Gareth Stedman Jones, “*Industrie*, pauperism and the Hanoverian state: the genesis and political context of the original debate about the “Industrial Revolution” in England and France, 1815–1840” (Working Paper, Centre for History and Economics, Cambridge 1997).

¹⁶ Steven Marcus, *Engels, Manchester and the Working Class* (London: Norton, 1974), 145.

Marcus does of course recognise that this twenty-four-year-old visitor to Manchester was German, had been converted to communism by Moses Hess and had some familiarity with Hegel. But he makes little attempt to understand – perhaps he does not actually perceive – how this intellectual and political formation structured Engels’ mode of seeing. He does not notice that the experience he so emphasises was in important respects pre-structured.

First, Hegel’s importance was not only, as Marcus remarks, that of enabling Engels’ effort to comprehend the whole or to treat the particular as an instance of the universal. Hegel was also crucial in the move from appearance to essence – the sequence, both logical and physical, that led Engels from the thoroughfares to the back streets. Such a progression was a far more powerful political and rhetorical device for binding together the different parts of the city or of society than the predominant metaphor of English social investigation during the Victorian era – that of the explorer, revealing lands and peoples as remote as Africa at the heart of civilisation.¹⁷ The juxtaposition of appearance and essence suggested not merely unfamiliar contiguity but also unsettling inner interdependence.

But such an approach to the new conditions of urban life was not unfamiliar to English readers. A similar effect had been achieved through the contrast between “the inner sphere of Fact” and “the outer sphere” of “Semblance” in Thomas Carlyle’s *Past and Present*.¹⁸ This was particularly so in his famous discussion of the Irish widow in Edinburgh who in vain solicited help from the charitable institutions of the city, finally died of typhus, and inadvertently caused as a consequence the deaths of seventeen other persons in her lane. Her fellow creatures had denied that she was their sister, “bone of your bone; one God made us.” “But she proves her sisterhood; her typhus fever kills *them*.”¹⁹

But even more important as an inspiration of Engels’ picture was a source not even mentioned by Marcus – the “communist” reading of Feuerbach’s vision of alienation and dehumanisation. Moses Hess later claimed that he had converted Engels to “communism” in Cologne on his way to England in late 1842. This “communism” was based upon the contrast between egoism and Feuerbach’s notion of “species consciousness,” or what he later defined as “the unity of I and thou.” Different

¹⁷ Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class. Studies in English Working Class History 1832–1982* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), ch. 4.

¹⁸ Thomas Carlyle, *Chartism, Past and Present* (London, [1839], 1910), 80.

¹⁹ Carlyle, *Chartism, Past and Present*, 187.

conceptions of “communism” developed from Feuerbach’s work were to be found in the single issue of the *Deutsch-französische Jahrbücher*, published at the beginning of 1844 – including two contributions by Engels. Engels’ conception was also no doubt consolidated in the summer of 1844, when he met Marx, the editor of the *Deutsch-französische Jahrbücher* in Paris, and agreed to collaborate with him.²⁰

What primarily motivated Engels to explore the working-class quarters of Manchester, as the emphases in the text confirm, was a desire to validate, both metaphorically and literally, the Feuerbachian conception of the ontological loss of humanity. This conception in Feuerbach was associated with religious alienation and – in the radical communist gloss added by young Hegelians like Moses Hess and Karl Marx – with the establishment of money and private property.²¹

What distinguished man from animal in Feuerbach’s theory was not consciousness but “species consciousness.”²² Thus, the loss of species consciousness or species being, consequent upon religion, private property, and the state, was identified by Feuerbachian communists with a return to animality. Furthermore, in Marx’s version of the theory, the condition of the wage worker was the prime example of alienation from human essence because the worker was daily forced to sell his form-creating capacity, his species being, in return for a wage, the mere satisfaction of his animal needs for food, drink, shelter, and procreation. Thus in the inhuman world, of which private property and religion were the expression, that which was essentially “human” became a mere means to satisfy animal ends.²³

The Condition of the Working Class is generally treated as a work written independently of Marx. But it is clear from the text that Engels felt himself to belong to the same Feuerbachian tendency as Marx and Hess and that he had read Marx’s essay on “The Jewish Question” in the *Deutsch-französische Jahrbücher*. *The Condition* echoed this position, for example, in its assertion that “money is the God of the world; the bourgeois takes the

²⁰ On the politics of Feuerbachianism, see Michel Löwy, *La théorie de la révolution chez le jeune Marx* (Paris: Editions sociales, 1970), 35–7.

²¹ See Moses Hess, “Über des Geldwesen,” in Moses Hess, *Philosophische und Sozialistische Schriften 1837–1850*, ed. W. Mönke (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1961), 329–48. Marx’s analysis of money in his essay “On the Jewish Question” in the *Deutsch-französische Jahrbücher* was largely taken from Hess’s contribution, which for unknown reasons Marx did not publish. Marx’s essay is published in *MECW*, vol. 3, 146–75.

²² See in particular Ludwig Feuerbach, “Preliminary Theses on the Reform of Philosophy,” in *The Fiery Brook*, ed. Zawar Hanfi (New York: Anchor Books, 1972), 153–75.

²³ Karl Marx, “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844,” *MECW*, vol. 3, 276.

proletarian's money from him and so makes a practical atheist of him. No wonder, then, if the proletarian retains his atheism and no longer respects the sacredness and power of the earthly God."²⁴

Unlike Carlyle, Kay-Shuttleworth, Chadwick, Disraeli, Tocqueville, Faucher, Cooke Taylor, or Dickens, therefore, Engels was not simply shocked by the instances of dehumanisation he encountered on his walks. For this dehumanisation confirmed as a fact about the modern economy and society what Feuerbach had initially conceived as a spiritual and metaphysical form of dissolution. These Feuerbachian ideas help to make sense of the organisation of Engels' book, when seen as a thread guiding his reading and interpretation of political economy and English history. The communist-Feuerbachian parable of the destiny of the worker took off from the German Protestant reading of the Christian story, as developed in German idealism – of the Christ who must endure the isolation and pain of Golgotha and the Crucifixion before the awakening of the Resurrection and the achieved community of the Pentecost.²⁵ Such a trope also shaped the unfolding of Engels' *Condition*, in which the worker must be degraded and wholly deprived of humanity before refinding his manhood through crude struggle to mental awakening.

The book started from the bucolic innocence of pre-industrial textile workers – a happy but deferential and stupefied group, combining manufacture and small landed property. These workers were dragged into the mainstream of world history by "the industrial revolution," which took away their land, dispossessed them of their tools, and forced them into the city and the factory.²⁶ Before this "revolution," these weavers and spinners had lived a mystified life "not worthy of human beings"; they were happy, but sunk in ignorance. It was only by being forced into history through "the industrial revolution," which "turned them into machines pure and simple," that they had been ultimately forced "to think and demand a position worthy of men."²⁷ The first stage was presented as an unhistorical or pre-historical prelude. The second stage was constructed around an account of the process of expropriation and degradation that laid the conditions for the formation of the proletariat. This was made

²⁴ *MECW*, vol. 4, p. 412.

²⁵ For an exploration of the theme, see Georges M.-M. Cottier, *L'athéisme du jeune Marx. ses origines hégéliennes* (Paris: Vrin, 1969).

²⁶ *MECW*, vol. 4, pp. 307–42. Engels probably took his notion of an "industrial revolution" from J. A. Blanqui, *Histoire de l'économie politique en Europe depuis les anciens jusqu'à nos jours*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1837).

²⁷ *MECW*, vol. 4, 309.

manifest in the third stage, which detailed the primitive beginnings of resistance – violence, crime, and “rob, plunder, murder and burn.” In the fourth and final stage, such resistance became increasingly self-conscious, leading first to the formation of trade unions and finally to the political organisation of the proletariat, defined by the class struggle against competition and private property.

The depiction of Manchester and “the great cities” belongs to the early part of the book, to the process of absolute pauperisation and dehumanisation that was the pre-condition of proletarian revolt. That is why if we look once again at the description of the working quarters, it is striking how pervasive and literal were the references to bestiality, criminality, and dehumanisation. The habitations beside the Irk were a “whole collection of cattle sheds for human beings.” The dwellings of “these helots of modern society” are no cleaner than “pigsties.” In Little Ireland “this race must have reached the lowest stage of humanity.” The view beneath the viaduct was of a “man living in a cow-stable.”²⁸ “He had constructed a sort of chimney for his square pen.” Similarly Engels made veiled hints about homosexuality or incest as ultimate signs of a reversion to animality. The common lodging houses were “scenes of deeds against which human nature revolts, which would perhaps have never been executed but for this forced centralisation of vice.”²⁹ Clearly the Manchester that revealed itself to Engels’ gaze was not merely the product of raw experience, of simple emancipation from bourgeois prejudice; in the writing at least, if not also in the seeing, Manchester had already been assigned its part in the drama – that of bearing witness to the darkest hours of torment before the dawn.

II

Engels’ decision to place the English working class within a Feuerbachian narrative about the dehumanisation and regeneration of man helps to explain the structure of the book and its emphasis upon the “animality” of the Manchester slums. The consequence of this narrative strategy was that Manchester had to be represented as the pure product of “the industrial epoch.” It now stood for “the degradation to which the application of steam power, machinery and the division of labour reduce the working man.”³⁰ But this posed a problem. For it was by no means self-evident that

²⁸ *MECW*, vol. 4, 364.

²⁹ *MECW*, vol. 4, 366.

³⁰ *MECW*, vol. 4, p. 345.

the condition of the whole working class in its supposedly propertyless, pauperised universality should be ascribed to the “industrial revolution.”

At the time when Engels wrote, the notion of an “industrial revolution” was not current in England. The term – to be more precise, “revolution of industry” – had originated in the work of Jean Baptiste Say in the 1820s. He developed the idea in his *Cours complet d'économie politique pratique* of 1828, largely in response to the writings of the Swiss economist and follower of Adam Smith, Simonde de Sismondi. Sismondi in his *Nouveaux principes d'économie politique, ou de la Richesse dans ses rapports avec la population* of 1819 attacked machinery as responsible for the numbers of unsold goods and unemployed operatives in postwar Europe. He contended that machinery had created a situation in which “Europe has reached the point of possessing in all its parts an industry and a manufacture superior to its needs.” It had also concentrated production in the hands of a small group of rich merchants who took no responsibility for the unemployment they had caused. The evidence that Sismondi produced to link machinery with the growth of unemployment was in fact rather slight. What was really important was the way in which he managed to link fear of machinery with a set of much deeper and more widespread anxieties to which it was only marginally related.

Across Europe, these anxieties concerned the growth of “pauperism,” and that growth was intimately related, not to machinery but to the major political events of the preceding thirty years – the French Revolutionary abolition of the corporate regulation of production by the 1791 Chapelier Law and the emergence of a landless peasantry after the revolutionary legislation of August 4, 1789. Elsewhere, it referred to the enclosure movement and the removal of legislative protection of apprenticeship in Britain, or the dismantling of guild regulation by the Prussian reformers and the eviction of landless peasants following the removal of patrimonial protection.

Anticipating the case later to be made by Wrigley and Schofield, Sismondi linked these developments, especially the displacement of artisans and peasants by a swelling class of day labourers, to an increase of population consequent upon a fall in the age of marriage.³¹ As he had already pointed out in his multivolume *History of the Italian Republics*, formerly competition had been regulated by the guilds, and journeymen

³¹ E. A. Wrigley and R. Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541–1871* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), ch. 10.

had married only on becoming masters.³² Now there were no longer any restraints. The new conditions had bred a miserable class with no attachment to the established order. This was “the proletariat,” whose single vocation was to produce children. The problem of England, therefore, was not, as Say argued, that of a bellicose, aristocratic state resting on corruption and colonies and heading for bankruptcy. It was rather that of a state built upon unlimited competition and a growing polarity of rich and poor guided by economists whose constant refrain was “*laissez faire et laissez passer*.”³³

Say’s response to Sismondi in the *Cours* attacked the idea that needs were fixed and insisted that machines were expensive and therefore introduced only gradually. He disputed the idea that machinery would create more volatile employment because the higher overheads of factories would tend to regularise work. More fundamentally, he used the examples of printing and cotton spinning to show how “*les révolutions de l’industrie*” could transform the economy of nations and increase wages. The recent wage cuts in England to which Sismondi had alluded in 1827 were ascribed by Say to a recent wave of Irish immigration. There was no truth, he insisted, to the implication that pauperism and industrialisation went together. He cited the example of the Poor Law. “There were scarcely any machines at the time of Queen Elizabeth and yet it was then that it was felt necessary to bring in that law for the support of the poor which has only served to multiply them.”³⁴

In the years that followed, particularly after 1830 in France and 1832 in Britain, a more self-conscious and explicit discontent on the part of artisans and factory workers had to be addressed. Say’s successor, Jerome Adolphe Blanqui, acknowledged Sismondi’s achievement in dramatising the contrast between conspicuous wealth and extreme poverty in England. But his reaction to Sismondi’s critique resembled that of Say. The progress of manufactures and the improvement of machines had been accompanied by a growth of national prosperity that had affected even the humblest workers. The promise of the emancipation of labour following the suppression of the guilds in France had been contradicted by the continuance of commercial protection that preserved privileges to certain groups and resulted in a “true commercial feudalism.” Similarly, in

³² J. C. L. Simonde de Sismondi, *Histoire des républiques italiennes du moyen âge*, 16 vols. (Paris, 1807–24).

³³ J. C. L. Simonde de Sismondi, *Nouveaux principes d’économie politique, ou de la Richesse dans ses rapports avec la population* (Paris, 1827 edition), vol. 1, 45.

³⁴ J. B. Say, *Cours complet d’économie politique pratique*, 6 vols, Paris 1828, p. 398.

Britain, despite the abolition of apprenticeship laws, “patriarchal labour” had been transformed into “industrial feudalism,” in which the worker became anew “the serf” of the workshop tied to the “glebe of wages.” The root cause of this situation was “the all-powerful aristocracy” who found it simple “to impose upon labour all the burdens of taxation.”³⁵

Anxiety about pauperism also became an increasingly salient feature of German discussion in the 1820s and 1830s, not least in the writings of Hegel. Like many of his generation, who took their lead from the Hanoverian publicist Justus Moser, Hegel during the French wars was an admirer of English freedoms and English constitutional government. This position persisted into the first years of peace. In the first version of the *Philosophy of Right*, delivered in the winter of 1817–18, Hegel emphasised the English practice of publicising parliamentary debates and remarked upon “how vastly more advanced the English people are than the German.”³⁶

Hegel was a close reader of Adam Smith, and as such his early treatment of the British economy was also positive. In his Heidelberg lectures, he agreed with Smith about the stupefying effects of the modern division of labour upon the labourer, but he thought the problem transitional. Through the replacement of mechanical human labour by machines, “the consummation of this mechanical progress, human freedom is restored.” In 1819, however, his tone changed sharply. “Wealth accumulates in the hands of the owners of factories . . . with the amassing of wealth, the other extreme also emerges – poverty, need and misery. In England, the work of hundreds of thousands of people is being carried out by machines.” Hegel appears to have read Sismondi.

But Hegel did not accept Sismondi’s position on machinery. In the published version of the *Philosophy of Right*, the political economists with whom he continued to associate himself were Smith, Ricardo, and Say.³⁷ If reading Sismondi in 1819 was a turning point in Hegel’s attitude towards England, it was not because it led him to take a less positive view of mechanisation or of industrial progress. Nor did it turn him against Smith’s conception of commercial society and the continued development of the division of labour. What appears to have impressed Hegel most powerfully were Sismondi’s strictures against *laissez-faire* and his emphasis upon

³⁵ J. A. Blanqui, *Histoire de l’économie politique en Europe*, vol. 2, 267 and 214.

³⁶ G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on Natural Right and Political Science*, tr. J. M. Stewart and P. C. Hodgson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 288.

³⁷ G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. A. W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 227.

the need for some form of protective and corporate framework to replace feudal protections in the countryside and guild regulation in the towns.

From around 1819, Hegel became increasingly critical of the historic liberties of the English that he and so many others in Germany had so admired during the years of Thermidor and Napoleon. As he later remarked, “the peoples of the Continent have allowed themselves to be impressed for so long by declamations about English freedom and by that nation’s pride in its own legislation.” But these “constitutional rights,” he continued, “have retained that form of private rights which they originally possessed, and hence also the contingent nature of their content.”³⁸

More particularly, he now realised the danger of the unrestricted exercise of these liberties in the social-economic sphere and began to consider it necessary to counter English-based claims that, “with freedom of enterprise, business-life flourishes” or, more specifically, that “industry flourished better after the removal of corporations.”³⁹ “Experience tells us the contrary,” Hegel insisted. The example of England should not be used because “unlike every other people, England has the whole world as its market.” Equally, however, it possessed “the most monstrous poverty and rabblement (*Pöbelhaftigkeit*) and a large part of this sickness is to be attributed to the removal of the corporations.”⁴⁰

Once it is made clear that Hegel’s anxieties about England were not part of a failed attempt to grasp the consequences of industrialisation, the analysis of England put forward in his last text, “On the English Reform Bill,” makes much more sense. Hegel was concerned with England’s place in what for him was a far broader and more epochal transformation, in which France and Germany were also involved. This was what he called “the moment of transition from feudal tenure to property.” It was a moment in which the opportunity ought to have been taken to give the agricultural class the right to own land. But this had not happened in England because of the difference between England and Western Europe. England was characterised by the continuing privileges of its aristocracy and the *ad hoc* jumble of law, which Hegel called “positive right.” By

³⁸ G. W. F. Hegel, “On the English Reform Bill,” in Lawrence Dickey, ed., *Hegel’s Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 238–9.

³⁹ G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Rechtsphilosophie 1818–1831*, ed. K.-H. Ilting, 4 vols. (Stuttgart: Frommann, 1974), vol. 4, 625; for a more extensive development of this argument, see Gareth Stedman Jones, “Hegel and the economics of civil society,” in S. Kaviraj and S. Khilnani, eds., *Civil Society. History and Possibilities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 105–31.

⁴⁰ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Rechtsphilosophie*, vol. 3, 711.

contrast, in “the more civilised states on the Continent, legal relationships and laws had been “reshaped” on the basis of “universal reason.” In Hegel’s view, questions about the “material rights” of the poor could have been adequately addressed only by a monarch at the head of a rational state administration. But nothing in the 1832 Reform Bill suggested any concern about the role of the monarch or state administration. Either parliamentary legislation would therefore “remain in the hands of that class whose interests . . . are bound up with the existing system of property rights”; or, worse, a revolution would occur similar to that of France in 1830. In the name of equality and other “French abstractions,” a class of “*novi homines*” with no respect for the existing propertied class would mobilise the propertyless on the land and the “rabble” in the towns.

In England itself, the condition of the poor was still bearable. “Though disqualified from ownership of land and reduced to the status of leaseholders or day-labourers, they do find some work as a result of the wealth in England in general, or in its huge manufacturing industry in times of prosperity. But it is to a greater extent the poor law, by which every parish is obliged to look after its poor, that preserves them from the consequences of extreme deprivation.”⁴¹ In Ireland, on the other hand, the landlords had “disclaimed all obligation to provide for the subsistence of the populace which tills the land they own.” They sometimes evicted thousands, and there existed no poor law to offer them subsistence.

The analyses of Britain’s condition produced by Say and Hegel were in important respects diametrically opposed. Say thought that the process of deregulation of industry and commerce had not gone far enough and that there remained too many privileged groups and corporations enjoying lucrative protected positions. Hegel thought that although it was right to remove the privileges of the guilds, a corporate framework should have been renewed rather than simply dismantled, and that the lack of acknowledgement on the part of Britain’s rulers that the poor possessed any “material rights” was socially and politically dangerous. Both agreed, however that the British problem was that of a state governed by a selfish, ignorant, socially backwards, financially irresponsible aristocracy. Both, furthermore, were careful to distinguish the social and political sources of the growth of pauperism from questions surrounding machinery, steam power, and the progress of industry. It was because Sismondi had suggested that steam, factories, and machinery were responsible for

⁴¹ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Rechtsphilosophie*, vol. 3, 247. It is unclear what Hegel meant by the term “disqualified.” There was no legal limitation on the purchase of land.

overproduction, unemployment, falling wages, and the proliferation of a socially rootless proletariat that Say first devised his notion of “revolutions of industry.” As followers of Adam Smith, both Say and Hegel considered that insofar as the problems of the landless poor or of rural and urban pauperism and the progress of British industry were interconnected, it was that the latter might alleviate the former. Mechanisation would replace dull and repetitive work associated with an advanced stage in the division of labour; and in the long run – as Say’s example of the invention of printing was designed to demonstrate – would produce massive increases, both in the volume of employment and in the standard of living.

At the end of November 1842, eleven years after Hegel’s thoughts on the Reform Bill, the twenty-two-year-old Engels arrived in England. He had no doubt that the social revolution in England was imminent. The grounds of Engels’ expectation were not unlike those of Hegel. He speaks of “a state like England, which by virtue of its political exclusiveness and self-sufficiency has finally come to lag some centuries behind the Continent.” It was “a state which sees only arbitrary rule in freedom and is up to its neck in the Middle Ages.” “Is there any other country in the world,” he continued, “where feudalism retains such enduring power . . . Is the much-vaunted English freedom anything but the purely formal right to act? And what laws they are! A chaos of confused, mutually contradictory regulations . . . not in accord with our times.”⁴²

The most immediate source of Engels’ initial diagnosis of the condition of England was Moses Hess. It was Hess, at that time the foreign editor of the *Rheinische Zeitung* in Cologne, who had encountered Engels on his way to England and claimed to have converted him to “communism.” Hess’s vision of “communism,” to which at that time Engels certainly subscribed, was outlined in his book *The European Triarchy*. He argued that the emancipation of mankind would be the task of three nations. Germany, the land of the Reformation, was to realise spiritual freedom. France, the country of the great revolution of 1789, was to attain political freedom. England was now on the verge of social revolution as a result of the mounting contradiction between “pauperism” and “the money aristocracy.” Its task was to realise social equality. Its revolution would be “social” because, as Hess stated in the *Rheinische Zeitung* in the summer of 1842, industry had passed from the hands of the people to the machines

⁴² Frederick Engels, “The English View of the Internal Crises,” in *MECW*, vol. 2, 370–1.

of the capitalists. Commerce had become concentrated in the hands of “capitalists and adventurers (i.e. swindlers).” Through primogeniture, the land had fallen into the hands of “a few great families.” Writing at the time of the Lancashire plug-plot riots, Hess thought he could now detect the final onset of “the approaching catastrophe.”⁴³ Engels, arriving a few months later, believed the same.

It is noticeable that during the first fourteen months of his residence in England, Engels made no reference to an “industrial revolution.” Talk of competition, “the money aristocracy,” and the displacement of small capitalists by large was the common currency of radicals and socialists during the period. It did not entail a conception of industrialisation. Even in an essay written for the Paris-based *Deutsch-französische Jahrbücher* on Thomas Carlyle, no reference was made to an “industrial revolution.” Carlyle thought the crisis in “the condition of England” was primarily the result of the loss of religious faith and the displacement of former feudal dependencies by the “cash nexus.”⁴⁴ Similarly, the first essay of the same journal to ascribe a revolutionary role to “the proletariat,” put forward its argument in terms made familiar by the preceding pauperism debate in Germany. Karl Marx, the author of the essay, defined “the proletariat” as “a class of civil society, which is not a class of civil society, an estate which is the dissolution of all estates.” Although this proletariat was coming into being “as a result of rising industrial development,” it was also claimed to be the result of “the drastic dissolution of society.”⁴⁵ What Marx at that point was describing was a social group outcast by the disintegration of estate society.

Engels’ first use of the term “industrial revolution” occurred around February–March 1844 in an essay entitled “The Condition of England. 1. The Eighteenth Century.” In this account, Engels wrote of “the invention of the steam engine and of machinery for working cotton” that “gave rise, as is well known, to an industrial revolution.” But he also argued that “the historical importance” of this revolution was “only now beginning to be recognised.” Furthermore, the only sources mentioned – the 1844

⁴³ Moses Hess, “Die europäische Triarchie,” in W. Mönke, ed., *Moses Hess: Philosophische und Sozialistische Schriften 1837–1850* (Vaduz: Topos Verlag, 1980), 159–60; M. Hess, “Über eine in England bevorstehende Katastrophe,” *Rheinische Zeitung*, no. 177, 26 June 1842, in *ibid.*, 183–5.

⁴⁴ Frederick Engels, “The Condition of England. *Past and Present* by Thomas Carlyle, London 1843,” in *MECW*, vol. 3, 444–69.

⁴⁵ Karl Marx, “Contribution to Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Law. Introduction,” in *MECW*, vol. 3, 186–7.

edition of J. R. McCulloch's *Dictionary of Commerce* and G. R. Porter's *Progress of the Nation* (1836–43) – made no reference to such a revolution. Engels' depiction of “the industrial revolution” was straightforwardly factual.⁴⁶ It is therefore most likely that he read the account in Blanqui's *Histoire de l'économie politique en Europe*.

In *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, written in the months after this first essay, little attention has been paid to Engels' development of the “industrial revolution” theme, in particular to his enlargement of the idea to account not only for Britain's industrial transformation but also for all the conditions formerly attributed to “pauperism.” Furthermore, as he had already argued in the initial essay, the “industrial revolution” described not only industrial change but what socialists and communists portrayed as a massive social and moral transformation:

This revolution through which British industry has passed is the foundation of every aspect of modern English life, the driving force behind all social development. Its first consequence was . . . the elevation of self interest to a position of dominance over man. Self interest seized the newly created industrial powers and exploited them for its own purposes; these powers, which by right belong to mankind, became owing to the influence of private property, the monopoly of a few rich capitalists and the means to the enslavement of the masses. Commerce absorbed industry into itself and thereby became omnipotent, it became the nexus of mankind; all personal and national intercourse was reduced to commercial intercourse, and – which amounts to the same thing – property, things, became master of the world.⁴⁷

To treat “pauperism” and *laissez-faire* as part of the story of “the industrial revolution” was a bold but in many ways arbitrary move, and in Engels' account of Manchester, the newly stitched seams tying together these formerly distinct questions were still visible. A good example was Engels' horrifying description of Manchester's proletarian townscape. What Engels described belonged more obviously to the preceding discussion of “pauperism.” For as urban historians have recently pointed out, “the most horrendous areas of Engels' Manchester lay close to the city centre, where factory work was not available and a casual labour market similar to that of inner Liverpool prevailed.”⁴⁸ Manchester's social

⁴⁶ Frederick Engels, “The condition of the working class in England,” in *MECW*, vol. 4, 307–23.

⁴⁷ Frederick Engels, “The Condition of England. 1. The Eighteenth Century,” in *MECW*, vol. 3, 485.

⁴⁸ F. M. L. Thompson, ed., *The Cambridge Social History of Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) vol. 1, 371–2.

problems were not solely or even primarily a product of machinery and factory work. They were specifically problems resulting from rapid urbanisation and population increase with the attendant pressures they imposed upon urban space, rents, water supply, and sanitary facilities. No one would deny that cotton had been the main agent in the growth of Manchester. But Manchester was not solely an industrial town, nor was it purely a creation of industrialisation. Its population already exceeded 20,000 in 1750 – a sizeable number before either the technological changes of industrialisation or the takeoff of cotton manufacture.⁴⁹ Similarly, its growth thereafter was as much a result of its position as a commercial centre as of the expansion of factory industry.

Like all commercial centres in the nineteenth century, Manchester became a magnet for casual labour, particularly in the multifarious and miscellaneous occupations servicing transport and storage – and that market for day labour had been increasingly supplied by Irish migrants. From the 1820s onwards, this swelling number of unskilled, penniless and pauperised Irish peasants with no previous experience of urban life turned the centre of Manchester into the hell on earth that Engels depicted. Even making the most generous allowances, such a plight could not be taken to represent the condition of Manchester workers as a whole. It was crucial to Engels' argument that the condition of the modern proletariat be presented as singular and universal. But the apparent consistency of this argument was sustained only through surreptitious changes of character and scene at the back of the stage, for the attempt to present a single, undifferentiated, propertyless subject concealed what was in fact a shifting and differentiated set of actors playing different roles. While it may be true, as Engels claimed, that the "labour movement" was born in great cities, it was certainly not born in the districts he described.⁵⁰

In Engels' book, overlapping but distinct themes – pauperism, the urban underclass, *laissez-faire*, and industrialisation – were combined into a single narrative. Themes from the German preoccupation with pauperism were incorporated within a French-based account of industrialisation and made to form of a single (Left Hegelian) story of the

⁴⁹ Thompson, ed., *The Cambridge Social History of Britain* p. 27.

⁵⁰ *MECW*, vol. 4, 360; this conflation between the outlook of workers employed in modern industry and that of those displaced from the land, uprooted casual labourers or the urban unemployed continued in the description Marx and Engels gave of "the proletariat" in *The Communist Manifesto*. See Gareth Stedman Jones, ed., K. Marx and F. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2002), "Introduction" section 3, "The Spectre of Communism."

regeneration of mankind. This procedure was repeated in *The Communist Manifesto* and henceforth became a standard feature of the Marxian characterisation of the working class.

More surprisingly, perhaps, it also came to dominate the English New Liberal account of industrialisation from the last quarter of the nineteenth century. When Engels' *Condition* was rediscovered in the 1880s, particular judgements were questioned, but the general narrative was accepted. Its provenance – the dire warnings of Carlyle and the apocalyptic expectations of Feuerbach and Hess – was forgotten. Henceforth, it became the standard story of “the industrial revolution” – or at least, the “pessimist” account – from Arnold Toynbee in the 1880s and the Hammonds in the 1910s and 1920s through to Edward Thompson and Eric Hobsbawm in the 1960s and after.

The Basis of the State in the Marx of 1842

Andrew Chitty

In his 1837 “letter to his father,” Marx famously describes how he became a Hegelian:

From the idealism which, by the way, I had compared and nourished with the idealism of Kant and Fichte, I arrived at the point of seeking the Idea in the actual itself [*im Wirklichen selbst*]. If previously the gods had dwelt above the earth, now they became its centre. . . . I had read fragments of Hegel’s philosophy, the grotesque craggy melody of which did not appeal to me. Once more I wanted to dive into the sea, but with the definite intention of finding that spiritual nature [*die geistige Natur*] is just as necessary, concrete and firmly based as physical nature [*die körperliche*] . . . ¹

In his first notebook on Epicurean philosophy of 1839, Marx tersely identifies “spiritual nature” with the state,² and in fact Hegel himself in the *Philosophy of Right* describes the system of right,³ which provides the institutional structure of the state, as a “second nature,” a nature grounded in spirit in the same way that physical nature is grounded in the Idea: “The system of right is the realm of actualised freedom, the world of

¹ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, F., *Collected Works* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975–) (abbreviated as CW), Vol. 1, 18; K. Marx, and F. Engels, *Karl Marx Friedrich Engels Werke* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1956–) (abbreviated as MEW), vol. 40, 8; t.m. Here and below ‘t.m.’ indicates that the translation has been modified.

² Marx, CW 1, 409.

³ Hegel’s and the young Marx’s *Recht* refers to law in general (whether “natural” or “positive”: *Naturrecht* or *positives Recht*). I shall follow convention and translate it as “right”, while translating their *Gesetz*, which refers to a specific legal rule, as “a law” or “laws”.

I am grateful to Joe McCarney and Chris Arthur for comments on earlier versions of the piece, and to James Furner for advice in particular on translations.

spirit produced from within itself as a second nature.”⁴ Thus in 1837 Marx was setting himself the project of showing that the state is “firmly based” in some underlying essence of which it is the realisation or actualisation, just as for Hegel physical nature is the realisation of the Idea.⁵ Discovering this essence would enable Marx not only to explain the shape of existing states, as the realisation of that essence, but also to criticise them to the extent that they failed to realise that essence adequately.⁶ This would enable him to go beyond the idealism without content, represented by Kant and Fichte, that he had previously embraced in his thinking about law.⁷

The aim of this essay is to elucidate the account of this “essence of the state” that Marx went on to develop in the journalistic writings of his *Rheinische Zeitung* period, from January 1842 to March 1843, and to suggest that it served as a precursor to one of the central ideas in his later theory of history.

HEGEL, ETHICAL SUBSTANCE, AND THE STATE

Today “the state” is often used narrowly to mean a centralised set of decision-making and governing institutions, but Hegel generally uses it more broadly to mean a community of individuals unified by a single system of laws and a single set of governing institutions. For him “the state” is a successor concept to the ancient Greek “*polis*.”⁸ The issue is confused because in the last section of the *Philosophy of Right*, named “The State,” Hegel engages successively in a general discussion of the state in this broad sense, a discussion of its centralised governing institutions, and a discussion of its relations to other states that are necessarily mediated

⁴ G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. A. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) §4 (abbreviated as *PR*). Cf. *PR*, §151.

⁵ I shall treat “realisation” and “actualisation”, and their cognates, as interchangeable, but will use the former in my own discussion. In translations of Hegel and Marx I give “actualisation” for *Verwirklichung* and “realisation” for *Realisation*.

⁶ That is, in terms of Marx’s 1841 *Doctoral Dissertation*, to measure “the individual existence by the essence, the particular actuality by the idea.” (*CW* 1, 85; *MEW* 40, 326; t.m.). On the idea of essence in the very early Marx, see P. J. Kain, *Marx and Ethics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 20–25.

⁷ See *CW* 1, 11–18. Clearly Marx is inspired here by Hegel’s programmatic assertion that “What is rational is actual; what is actual is rational.” Hegel, *PR*, 20).

⁸ Cf. Rousseau’s use of “state” as a term for “the public person that is formed in this way by the union of all the others” through the social contract, and of a “people” as the collective name for those associated in such a union (J. J. Rousseau, *The Social Contract* [1762], tr. C. Betts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 1.6.

by those institutions.⁹ However his usage of the term “state” throughout this section is consistent with the broad sense outlined here.¹⁰ In what follows I shall use “state” in this broad sense, sometimes pointing this out explicitly for the sake of clarity.

For Hegel the essence of the state, and of the system of right that makes up its institutional structure, is in most general terms freedom. As he says in the *Philosophy of Right*, “Right is any existence in general which is the *existence of the free will*”¹¹ and “The state is the actuality of concrete freedom.” (PR §260)¹² Against Hobbes, for whom every state represented a necessary limitation on individuals’ freedom, Hegel conceives the system of right as a set of institutions through which alone human beings can properly realise their freedom, a freedom that, following Kant, he conceives as inseparable from reason.¹³

In the introduction to the *Philosophy of Right* Hegel gives a dialectical derivation of the genuinely free will as the will that wills its own freedom (PR §§9–22), prior to expounding the totality of institutions described in the book as realisations of that freedom. But arguably a better clue to how Hegel saw the system of right as the realisation of freedom is provided by his identification elsewhere of freedom with spirit: “Philosophy teaches us that *all* the attributes of spirit exist only by virtue of freedom [...] freedom is the one authentic property of spirit.”¹⁴ For this identification suggests that the system of right is the realisation of freedom through being the realisation of a spirit whose essential feature is freedom. In fact in the *Philosophy of Spirit* he describes right as “objective spirit”¹⁵ and says that it is here alone that spirit realises itself.¹⁶

⁹ Respectively at PR, §§257–271, §§272–320 (“the internal constitution”), and §§321–360 (“external sovereignty”, “international law” and “world history”).

¹⁰ At PR, §267 he contrasts “the political state proper [*der eigentlich politische Staat*], consisting in a set of centralised governing institutions (§273), with the political disposition of its subjects, which we can identify with “the state, as the spirit of the people” (§274).

¹¹ Hegel, PR, §29.

¹² Hegel calls the state “the actualisation of freedom” at PR, §258A, and also in the Introduction to the *Philosophy of History*. G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History. Introduction: Reason in History*, tr. H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 98; Johannes Hoffmeister, *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: Die Vernunft in der Geschichte* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1955), 116, adding there that in the state “freedom attains its objectivity and enjoys the fruits of its objectivity” (Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History. Introduction*, 97; Hoffmeister, *Die Vernunft*, 116).

¹³ See Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History. Introduction*, 93–94, 97–99.

¹⁴ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, Introduction*, 47–48.

¹⁵ G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, tr. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), §483.

¹⁶ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §385A.

In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel explains how a system of right can be a realisation of spirit. There he gives an account of spirit as a collective “substance” constituted by a community of mutually recognising individuals, which expresses itself in the customs and laws of that community – in other words, in its “system of right.” The initial encounter between two self-conscious beings in the *Phenomenology* leads, of course, to the master-servant relationship characterised by the one-way recognition of the master by the servant as self-determining, or free, so that the master becomes authoritative over the servant. This relationship constitutes a community of sorts, but a profoundly unsatisfactory one because neither the master nor the servant can see itself in the other, because one is independent of and one is dependent on the sensuous, yet it was the aim of finding an object which would display itself as identical to one-self that initially drove self-conscious beings to seek each other out.¹⁷ So the master-servant relationship must give way to a community of *mutual* recognition, in which each recognises the other as free, just like itself, and so is in the position of “beholding, in the independence of the *other*, complete *unity* with it, or of having as an object this free encountered thinghood of an other, which confronts me and is the negative of myself, as my own being-for-myself.”¹⁸

Hegel here calls this community “a people” (*Volk*)¹⁹ and says that in it individuals see themselves as sharing a common essence, their “ethical substance.”²⁰ The result is a process of what we could call mutual constitution between individuals and their shared ethical substance, for on the one hand this substance is constituted only by their mutual recognition of one another, but on the other hand each of them is the kind of being that it is only by virtue of seeing this substance as its own essence:

Reason is present here as the universal fluid *substance*, as unchangeable simple *thinghood*, which yet bursts asunder into many completely independent beings [*Wesen*], just as light bursts asunder into stars as countless self-luminous points, which in their absolute being-for-self are dissolved, not merely *in themselves*, but *for themselves*, into the simple independent substance. They are conscious of being

¹⁷ For an elaboration of this account of the master-servant dialectic, see Andrew Chitty, “Recognition and social relations of production”, *Historical Materialism* 2 (1998), 64–69.

¹⁸ G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* [1807], tr. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), §350; G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke*, 20 vols., eds. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), vol. 3, 264–5; t.m. At §349 Hegel describes this unity as “an in-itself universal self-consciousness”. (NB All references to the *Phenomenology* are to the paragraph numbers in Miller’s translation.)

¹⁹ Hegel also speaks of a “free people” at *Phenomenology*, §352 and §354.

²⁰ Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §349.

these individual [*einzelne*] independent beings through their sacrifice of their individuality, and through this universal substance being their soul and essence, just as this universal again is their own *doing* as individuals, or is the work that they have produced.²¹

Now this substance is what Hegel also calls spirit,²² the “I that is We and We that is I” to which he refers earlier in the *Phenomenology* (§177), and the customs and laws of a people are the expression of their shared ethical substance: “this universal substance speaks its *universal language* in the customs and laws of its people.”²³ Insofar as we can speak of the ethical substance’s coming to know itself by expressing itself in this “language,” and realising itself insofar as it comes to know itself, we can speak of customs and laws as *realising* the ethical substance or spirit of a people.²⁴

Of course, for Hegel the life of a people as such is self-inadequate in that their spirit is for them “in the form of being”²⁵ – that is, in that they experience it as something merely given rather than as constituted by their own actions, and, relatedly, in that each individual thinks of him- or herself *just* as a member of the ethical substance and not also as “pure individuality [*Einzelheit*] for itself.”²⁶ Although they constitute their shared spirit through their own practices of mutual recognition, it comes to seem to them as if this spirit exists independently of them rather than being their own product, and concomitantly they come to seem to themselves to be nothing but instantiations of it. These are the shortcomings of ancient societies for Hegel. To overcome them, a people must go on to become “collectively self-conscious,” in that all are aware of their collective spirit as constituted by their own actions and as their own product, and also to become “individually subjective,” in that each member is aware of itself as a self-determining individual as well as an instantiation of the collective spirit. This is what will finally be achieved in

²¹ Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §350; *Werke*, 3, 265; t.m.

²² E.g. at *Phenomenology*, §347. At §438, Hegel differentiates ethical substance from spirit by saying that spirit is ethical substance that is conscious of itself, but he does not maintain this distinction systematically.

²³ Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §351; *Werke* 3, 266; t.m.

²⁴ In the *Philosophy of Mind* Hegel does identify spirit’s self-realisation with its self-knowledge: “That spirit comes to a knowledge of what it is, this constitutes its realisation [...] initially it is only spirit in itself; its becoming-for-itself forms its actualisation” (Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §385A; *Werke* 10, 33; t.m.). Cf. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History. Introduction*, 48. Charles Taylor sees the idea of self-realisation through self-expression, which he calls “expressivism”, as central to Hegel’s thought as a whole: Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), esp. 11–29.

²⁵ Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §354.

²⁶ Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §355; *Werke*, 3, 267; t.m.

the modern state.²⁷ Yet despite these differences, when Hegel introduces the concept of the modern state (in his broad sense) in paragraph 257 of the *Philosophy of Right* he does so in terms that strikingly echo those he used in the *Phenomenology* to describe the ethical substance of a people:

The state is the actuality of the ethical idea – the ethical spirit as *manifest*, clear-to-itself, substantial will, which thinks and knows itself and implements what it knows insofar as it knows it. It has its immediate existence in *customs* and its mediated existence in the *self-consciousness* of the individual [*des Einzelnen*], in the individual's knowledge and activity, just as this [individual], through its disposition, has its *substantial freedom* in the state as its essence, its goal and the product of its activity.²⁸

Admittedly, one element of the *Phenomenology* description is downplayed here: the idea that the universal substance is not only the essence of individuals but also their “own *doing*” or their “product.” Nevertheless, if we put this passage together with the earlier discussion, we can conclude that for Hegel the system of right – that is, the full set of institutions of the modern state (in the broad sense), from private property and the family through to constitutional monarchy – both expresses and realises the common spirit of a collectively self-conscious and individually subjective community of mutually recognising individuals, individuals who in turn both constitute and are constituted by that common spirit. It expresses and realises that common spirit in that it spells out the rules and institutional forms through which individuals must behave towards one another if they are to form such a community.

Now for Hegel human freedom consists simply in living in such a community of mutual recognition; this is what he means by saying that freedom is the essential quality of spirit.²⁹ Therefore the system of right, in expressing and realising the common spirit of such a community, also expresses and realises the freedom of its members.³⁰

²⁷ “Collectively self-conscious” and “individually subjective” are my own coinages. However Hegel uses the term “self-conscious people” at §720 of the *Phenomenology* to describe a people that “knows its state and the actions of the state to be the will and the achievement of its own self”; and he speaks of the “principle of subjectivity” or “principle of subjective freedom” to describe the sense of individual self-determination and individual rights that differentiates the modern state from the ancient ones (e.g. Hegel, *PR*, §§124R, 185R, 206R, 260, 260R, 262A, 299R, 355R).

²⁸ Hegel, *PR*, §257; t.m.. Cf. *PR*, §260, which is couched in similar terms, although here Hegel emphasises the “principle of subjectivity” (see previous note) as a component of the modern state.

²⁹ I shall not attempt to defend this conception of freedom here.

³⁰ There is secondary sense, parasitic on the first but foregrounded in the introduction to the *Philosophy of Right*, in which the system of right realises the freedom of the members

To summarise then, for Hegel the essence of the state is in the first instance the common spirit of its citizens, and at a deeper level the freedom inherent in that spirit. The state's system of right expresses and realises this spirit, and thereby also the freedom inherent in it.

RUGE AND MARX ON HEGEL

The Left Hegelians began to take an openly critical attitude towards Hegel's political philosophy with Arnold Ruge's articles of June 1840 and August 1842.³¹ Ruge's comments on paragraph 257 of the *Philosophy of Right*, which he quotes at the start of the second of these articles, are especially helpful in seeing his own position, which in turn we can take as a starting point for examining Marx's at the time. On the one hand, just before he quotes this paragraph (as I have done above), Ruge says that Hegel has asserted "the most profound concept of the state that humanity had thus far achieved."³² Yet on the other hand, immediately after quoting it, he paraphrases the paragraph so as to emphasise that the state is the *product* of self-conscious subjects, and then he goes on to construe this in terms of public debate and self-rule, although the first of these three ideas is reduced almost to an afterthought in Hegel's paragraph, and the second and third are quite absent from it. Ruge says:

Therefore the public spirit and the process of *public* thinking and achievement is the state; the state is the essence, and the self-conscious subject the existence;

of this community. For Hegel, to be genuinely free is to will your own freedom (Hegel, *PR*, §§10–23), but as argued in the main text above freedom consists in participation in the system of right, so to be genuinely free is to will the existence of, and your own participation in, this system. Therefore, in so far as the existing system of right is actively willed by its members, it is the "realisation of their freedom" in that its existence is the achievement of what they, as free wills, will. In the primary sense the system of right is the realisation of freedom in that participating in it is constitutive of free interaction between individuals. In the secondary sense it is this realisation in that it is what a free will necessarily wills to exist. It is the "record of our acts of will", as Rousseau says of the laws (*Social Contract* 2.6), except that where Rousseau had in mind a will towards the common satisfaction of our needs and desires, Hegel has in mind a will towards the common achievement of freedom.

³¹ Arnold Ruge, "Zur Kritik des gegenwärtigen Staats- und Völkerrechts" [1840], in G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts*, ed. H. Reichelt (Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein, 1972), 598–623; "Die Hegelsche Rechtsphilosophie und die Politik unsere Zeit" [1842], in Manfred Riedel, ed., *Materialien zu Hegels Rechtsphilosophie*, band 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975), 323–349, translated as "Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right' and the Politics of Our Times" in Lawrence Stepelevich, ed., *The Young Hegelians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp.

³² Stepelevich, *The Young Hegelians*, 216; Riedel, *Materialien*, 327.

yet the essence is not only the goal, but also the *product* of the activity of the self-conscious subject, and thus freedom is this *self-producing and self-governing thinking and willing*, which exists immediately as *customs*, but mediately through self-conscious subjects.³³

In this way Ruge, while officially endorsing Hegel's concept of the state in paragraph 257, provides a decisively republican gloss on it, in part by restoring an element in it from the corresponding passage in the *Phenomenology*. It is in the light of the concept of the state so glossed that he goes on to criticise Hegel for failing to make room for the ideas of public political discussion and collective self-determination in his account of the state's centralised governing institutions, so that in effect this account makes Hegel's state as a whole a "police state" (*ibid.*) – one in which government officials ensure the welfare of individuals who for their part lead purely private lives.³⁴

As a starting point it seems reasonable to assume that Marx, who corresponded with Ruge throughout 1842 and 1843, might have taken a similar attitude towards the *Philosophy of Right* in this period. We know that he made a study of the book in the autumn of 1841, a few months after submitting his doctoral dissertation, and apparently he then began working on an article criticising it. In a letter to Ruge in March 1842 he says that this article is finished apart from some corrections, and describes it as "a critique of Hegelian natural right, insofar as it concerns the *internal constitution*. The central point is the struggle against *constitutional monarchy* as a hybrid which from beginning to end contradicts and abolishes itself."³⁵

Marx never published the article,³⁶ but we can surmise that its approach might have been the same as that of the section on the monarch

³³ Stepelevich, *The Young Hegelians*, 216; Riedel, *Materialien*, 328; t.m.

³⁴ For a contemporary version of this kind of critique of Hegel, see Klaus Hartmann, "Towards a new systematic reading of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*", in Z. A. Pelczynski, ed., *The State and Civil Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), esp. 126–131. I am grateful to Douglas Moggach for pointing out the relevance of Hartmann's piece to the themes of this article.

³⁵ *CW* 1, 382; *MEW* 27, 397; t.m.

³⁶ He promised it for publication again as late as August (*CW* 1, 393). Assuming that he did indeed write it, it seems likely that he avoided publishing it because he recognised that a direct attack on the monarchy at the time would be too dangerous: it is noticeable that Marx avoids directly criticising the monarchy at any point in his *Rheinische Zeitung* articles (and at two points he even defends it, although in noticeably republican language: *CW* 1, 147, 349). Even so, when the ministerial rescript ordering the closure of the paper was issued in January 1843 it cited the paper's intention to "develop theories which aim at undermining the monarchical principle" (*CW* 1, 361).

at the start of his 1843 *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*.³⁷ There he attacks the idea of the monarchy from the standpoint of a conception of the state that looks similar to Hegel's own in paragraph 257, as interpreted by Ruge. Adopting Hegel's conception of sovereignty as the "idealism" of the state, that unity which infuses all its constituent parts and makes them into its organs or limbs³⁸ but rejecting Hegel's claim that this unity is realised only through the figure of the monarch, he asserts that "sovereignty is nothing but the objectified spirit of the subjects of the state,"³⁹ and asks, against Hegel. "What sort of state idealism would be that which, instead of being the actual self-consciousness of the citizens, the common soul of the state, were to be *one person, one subject*?"⁴⁰

Like Ruge, Marx emphasises the idea that the state is the product of individuals' actions. So it is quite possible that in 1842 Marx, like Ruge, continued to endorse Hegel's conception of the *essence* of the state, as it is summarised in paragraph 257 of the *Philosophy of Right*, while repudiating the detailed conclusions he had drawn about the proper *form* of its centralised governing institutions, its "internal constitution."⁴¹

MARX ON HUMAN SELF-REALISATION AND THE ESSENCE OF THE STATE

In fact an analysis of the *Rheinische Zeitung* period writings indicates that at least for most of 1842 this is just what Marx did. Before demonstrating this, we need to establish that for the Marx of this period, even more clearly than for Hegel, "the state" meant not a set of centralised governing

³⁷ The 1843 *Critique* again covers the part on the "internal constitution" (the monarch, the executive and the legislature) in the *Philosophy of Right*, although it begins a few paragraphs before the start of this part and breaks off shortly before the end.

³⁸ Hegel, *PR*, §§276–278.

³⁹ *CW* 3, 24; *MEW* 1, 225; t.m.

⁴⁰ *CW* 3, 24; *MEW* 1, 225, t.m. In the 1843 *Critique* Marx develops that view that the unity of the state lies in the common spirit of its citizens into a frank advocacy of democracy against monarchy: "Democracy is the truth of monarchy; monarchy is not the truth of democracy [...] In monarchy we have the people of the constitution; in democracy the constitution of the people. Democracy is the solved *riddle* of all constitutions. Here, not merely *in itself*, in essence, but in existence, in actuality, the constitution is constantly brought back to its actual basis, the *actual human being*, the *actual people*, and established as their *own* work. The constitution appears as what it is, a free product of man" (*CW* 3, 29; *MEW* 1, 231). In the *Rheinische Zeitung* period writings, as I argue below, he does not explicitly draw this conclusion.

⁴¹ Direct references to Hegel are not of much help as evidence for Marx's views on him in this period. In the *Rheinische Zeitung* writings he makes only three very brief references to Hegel by name (*CW* 1, 201, 309, 362): the first two in approving and the third in disapproving terms.

institutions (a “government,” as I shall say henceforward)⁴² but a legally and politically unified community as a whole. In fact Marx specifically attributes the former view of the state to a misunderstanding that is characteristic of officials within the government: “[T]o the official only the sphere of activity of the authorities is the state, whereas the world outside this sphere of activity is an object of the state, completely lacking the state disposition and state understanding.”⁴³

Elsewhere he repeatedly counterposes the state as a whole to the “government,”⁴⁴ to the “central state power,”⁴⁵ and to the “state-administration.”⁴⁶ At one point he refers to the state as a whole as the “state organism” in contrast to state institutions,⁴⁷ and at another he describes the government as an organ of the state.⁴⁸ Specifically, if the state as a whole is an organism, then Marx’s view seems to be that the government or administration is that organ through which it is able to engage in conscious activity: “the state possesses its conscious and active existence in the administration.”⁴⁹

For Marx in 1842 the essence of the state is in general terms, and as for Hegel, human freedom. All human beings are essentially free: “Freedom is so much essence of man that even its opponents implement it while combating its reality.”⁵⁰ But humans can realise their freedom only by associating into a state:

[T]he state itself educates [*erzieht*] its members in that it makes them into state-members, in that it converts the aims of the individual into universal aims, raw

⁴² I take that this is what Marx means by *Regierung* in 1842.

⁴³ *CW* 1, 344; *MEW* 1, 185; t.m.

⁴⁴ *CW* 1, 122, 155, 305, 322, 363.

⁴⁵ *CW* 1, 183.

⁴⁶ *CW* 1, 337.

⁴⁷ *CW* 1, 122.

⁴⁸ *CW* 1, 120. Elsewhere Marx suggests that the people and the government are two components of the state, saying that his newspaper “has considered defects of the state to be just as much defects of the people as of the government” (*CW* 1, 363; cf. *CW* 1, 305). Thus Chen Xueming, “An inquiry into Marx’s early views on philosophy of law and his early legal thinking”, *Social Sciences in China* 4:2, (1983), 28, cannot be correct in identifying Marx’s state directly with “the people”. For Rousseau on this distinction see note 9 above.

⁴⁹ *CW* 1, 345. Thus for Marx an example of “a state” would be Prussia taken as a politically unified community, not just the Prussian central government (see *CW* 1, 362, 384), just as an example of “a province” would be the Rhineland, again taken as a politically unified community. Meanwhile Marx’s “government” or “administration” corresponds roughly to Hegel’s “political state” (see note 11 above). Of course the account of Marx’s conception of the state given here relates only to the *Rheinische Zeitung* writings; in the 1843 *Critique* Marx begins to restrict “the state” to the central governing institutions, to Hegel’s “political state”.

⁵⁰ *CW* 1, 155.

drive into ethical [*sittliche*]⁵¹ inclination, natural independence into spiritual freedom, in that the individual enjoys himself in the life of the whole and the whole [enjoys itself] in the disposition of the individual.⁵²

The state is a “free association of ethical human beings” that is the “actualisation of freedom.”⁵³ In turn, following Kant’s and Hegel’s identifications of freedom with reason, Marx associates the “spiritual freedom” that is realised by the state with reason, so that the state is an actualisation not just of freedom but of “rational freedom”⁵⁴:

The more ideal and thorough view of recent philosophy [...] considers the state as the great organism, in which rightful, ethical and political freedom has to be actualised, and in which the individual citizen in obeying the laws of the state obeys only the natural laws of his own reason, of human reason.⁵⁵

Again, human freedom and reason imply equality, because both are possessed equally by all human beings.⁵⁶ Thus a state is an association of individuals who by virtue of that association have become

⁵¹ In this and following quotations I have consistently translated Marx’s *sittlich* as “ethical”.

⁵² *CW* 1, 193; *MEW* 1, 95; t.m. There is a clear echo of Rousseau’s description of the “remarkable change in man” brought about by the social contract (*Social Contract* 1.8) in the first part of this passage, and of §257 of the *Philosophy of Right* (quoted above) in its final clause.

⁵³ *CW* 1, 192; *MEW* 1, 94; t.m. Hegel also asserts that humans are free by their nature but can only realise this freedom through right and the state; see his comments on the state of nature at Hegel 1830c, 98, and his summary lecture statement: “Our determination is freedom, which must actualise itself, and this actualisation is right” (G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Rechtsphilosophie* [1828], volume 4, ed. K.-H. Ilting (Stuttgart: Frommann, 1974), 149; quoted by A. Wood in *PR*, 402; t.m. In turn right acquires an objective existence in positive laws (Hegel, *PR*, §§211).

⁵⁴ *CW* 1, 200.

⁵⁵ *CW* 1, 202; *MEW* 1, 104; t.m. Thus “the state must be constructed from the reason of freedom” (*CW* 1, 200; *MEW* 1, 103; t.m.). Marx is not explicit about the relation between freedom and reason, beyond repeating the Kantian idea that the “last fetter of freedom” is that of “being a rational being” (*CW* 1, 209; cf. 206). Nor does he say much about his conception of reason, although he does suggest that it involves acting impartially and for the common good. See his contrasts between “the reason of society” and “the reason of the individual” (*CW* 1, 202; *MEW* 1, 104; t.m.), between “civic [*Staatsbürgerlich*] reason” and “estate unreason” (*CW* 1, 363), and between “rational will” and the will that is “chained to the most petty and narrow interests” (*CW* 1, 245; *MEW* 1, 130; t.m.; cf. *CW* 1, 147, 301, 305).

⁵⁶ Marx’s views on human equality are less explicit than on freedom and reason, but they are evident in his repeated polemics against privileges (e.g. *CW* 1, 155, 177–178); in his insistence on the unity of all human beings (*CW* 1, 191, 230–1) and on their common possession of freedom and reason (*CW* 1, 151); and in his assertion that laws must be “universal norms” (*CW* 1, 162), or have “the form of law – universality and necessity” (*CW* 1, 231, cf. 232), so that all citizens are equal before the law (*CW* 1, 120).

transformed – have undergone a “political rebirth”⁵⁷ – so as to realise their own intrinsic capacity for freedom and reason, and thus also their own intrinsic equality.

It follows that the laws of the state, insofar as they are “true” laws, are nothing but conscious articulations of human freedom and reason, the means whereby associated human beings publicly spell out the content of their freedom and reason and bind themselves to living in accord with it, thereby realising it:⁵⁸

Law [*das Gesetz*] [...] is *true* law only when in it the unconscious natural law of freedom has become conscious state law. Where the law is actual law, i.e. the existence of freedom, it is the actual existence of humans as free [*das wirkliche Freiheitsdasein des Menschen*]. Laws, therefore, cannot prevent the actions of man, for they are the inner laws of life of his action itself, the conscious mirror-images of his life. Hence law withdraws into the background in the face of man’s life as a life of freedom, and only when his actual behaviour has shown that he has ceased to obey the natural law of freedom does it, as state law, compel him to be free, just as the laws of physics confront me as something alien only when my life has ceased to be the life of these laws, when it has been *struck by illness*.⁵⁹

Thus, echoing Hegel almost to the word, Marx can say that law “is *right* because it is the positive existence of freedom.”⁶⁰ Furthermore, and again following Hegel, law is not simply the articulation of human freedom and reason in the abstract. Just as for Hegel right is the realisation of freedom as the essential property of a collective spirit formed by mutual recognition, so for Marx law is the articulation of the freedom, reason, and equality that individuals possess as participants in the collective spirit that is formed when they associate into a state. It is in this

⁵⁷ CW 1, 306.

⁵⁸ Everything that follows applies to “true” or “actual” law. Marx is quite clear that existent positive laws may fail to be true law: “censorship like slavery can never become lawful [*gesetzlich*], even if it is present a thousand times over as law” (CW 1, 162, t.m.). If he is true to his 1837 claim that the Idea is to be sought in “the actual itself” then he must think of such untrue positive laws as somehow less than fully real.

⁵⁹ CW 1, 162–3; MEW 1, 58; t.m.

⁶⁰ CW 1, 162. He is referring to “press law” in the sentence but the sentiment is clearly intended to apply to law as a whole. See also the immediately preceding passage: “[R]ightful recognised freedom exists in the state as *law* [*Gesetz*]. Laws are in no way repressive measures against freedom, any more than law of gravity is a repressive measure against motion [...] Laws are rather the positive, clear, universal norms in which freedom has acquired an impersonal theoretical existence independent of the arbitrary will of the individual. A legal code is a people’s bible of freedom” (CW 1, 162; MEW 1, 58; t.m.).

“state spirit,”⁶¹ “political spirit,”⁶² “ethical spirit,”⁶³ or “people’s spirit,”⁶⁴ or more exactly in human freedom, reason, and equality as they are realised in this spirit, that for Marx real essence of the state consists.⁶⁵

HISTORICAL CHANGE AND THE ESSENCE OF THE STATE

So far it looks as if Marx’s conception of the essence of the state in 1842 is close to Hegel’s. It is true that Marx nowhere mentions mutual recognition as the means whereby humans create the collective spirit that is the essence of the state, and that – possibly under the influence of Aristotle or Feuerbach – he is much more willing than Hegel to connect the freedom and reason realised in this spirit with “human nature.”⁶⁶

Furthermore, Marx resembles Ruge and differs sharply from Hegel in deriving broadly egalitarian and republican political conclusions from this conception of the essence of the state. Thus he attacks in turn the grounding of state laws in religious authority, action by government officials motivated by their particular self-interest, decisions by estates assemblies driven by the particular interests of the classes represented in them, the reduction of the state to a “spiritual animal kingdom” of unequal classes, the fetishism whereby private property owners become “possessed” by their own property instead of acting for the general good, and finally the misattribution of the common state spirit to individuals, a misattribution that Feuerbach and others had already attacked under the name “personalism.”⁶⁷ Meanwhile, Marx repeatedly calls for freedom of the press and for the publication of assembly debates.

⁶¹ *CW* 1, 165, 296.

⁶² *CW* 1, 135–6.

⁶³ *CW* 1, 313, 314.

⁶⁴ *CW* 1, 143–4, 164, 262, 312–14, 322, 363.

⁶⁵ The close associations between “people’s spirit” (*Volksgeist*) and the ideas of freedom and reason in Marx make it almost certain that he was drawing on Hegel for his conception of this spirit, but it should be mentioned that the idea that every people has a common spirit or character, if not always the term *Volksgeist*, had been used by a number of other thinkers, including Montesquieu, Herder and Savigny, by the time Marx was writing (see Nathan Rotenstreich, “*Volksgeist*”, in P. P. Wiener, ed., *The Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1973), vol. 4, 490–96.

⁶⁶ Of course he also refrains from conceiving the common spirit of the state or its freedom as manifestations of a metaphysical absolute like Hegel’s Idea. I have ignored this dimension of Hegel’s political thought in my discussion above.

⁶⁷ For a detailed inquiry into this last theme among the Young Hegelians, see Warren Breckman, *Marx, The Young Hegelians and the Origins of Radical Social Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Of course in each of the above cases Marx can be seen to be drawing on resources in the Hegelian corpus as a whole: for example, the critique of “personalism” can be traced to the supersession of primitive Christianity in

Most of these demands imply an ideal of popular political participation in some form, and at some points Marx goes further and suggests that it is the will of the people as a whole that should be the highest authority in the state. He says once that laws should be “the conscious expression of the people’s will [*Volkswillens*], thus created with it and through it,”⁶⁸ and elsewhere he calls for “the province”⁶⁹ and for the people of the state⁷⁰ to actively “represent itself” through its assemblies rather than be passively represented by them.⁷¹ Yet these statements remain compatible with the underlying Hegelian conception of the state and its essence outlined above, as long as the will of the people is not defined as whatever majority opinion on a matter is, but as a will that expresses and demands the institutionalisation of the freedom, reason, and equality realised in the people’s spirit, and everything Marx says on the subject is consonant with such an “idealising” conception of the people’s will.⁷²

So his more radical political conclusions do not prevent Marx from remaining very close to Hegel in his underlying conception of the state and its essence. Where Marx starts to move substantially away from Hegel in his conception of this essence is where he begins to talk about it as changing over historical time.

Of course for Hegel too the spirit that is the essence of the state changes historically, developing in such a way as to embody its own inherent freedom more adequately, with the result that the forms of the state too have

chapter 7C of the *Phenomenology*. See also Douglas Moggach, *The Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), ch. 4.

⁶⁸ *CW* 1, 309; *MEW* 1, 150; t.m.

⁶⁹ *CW* 1, 147–150.

⁷⁰ *CW* 1, 305–306.

⁷¹ We can speculate that if it had not been for caution with regard to the censors Marx would have expressed these sentiments more clearly (see note 36 above). It should be mentioned that in the last of the three passages cited Marx intimates a demand for the abolition of centralised governing institutions altogether, a demand he is to make explicit in the later part of the 1843 *Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*.

⁷² For parallel thoughts in Hegel see note 52 above. In the one place where Marx envisages a divergence between common opinion and the requirements of “universal human nature” he sides decisively with the latter, saying that philosophy cannot “confuse the illusory horizon of a particular world- and people’s view with the true horizon of the human spirit” (*CW* 1, 191–2; *MEW* 1, 93–4; t.m.). On rule by the will of the people (popular sovereignty) versus the rule of freedom and reason in the Marx of 1842, cf. Chen, “An inquiry into Marx’s early views”, esp. 43. On the more general move from “the Idea” (in which we might include the concepts of freedom and reason) to democracy as guiding political ideals for left Hegelians, see Lawrence Dickey, “Hegel on religion and philosophy”, in Frederick Beiser, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 321–331. The implicit tensions in Marx’s thought here obviously reproduce those in Rousseau’s idea of the general will.

to change.⁷³ So it is not by referring to historical change as such that Marx begins to deviate from Hegel. Rather it is by the way that, in referring to historical change, especially towards the end of 1842, he starts to conceive the essence of the state differently. The best way to see this is by briefly tracking some of Marx's uses of the idea that the proper job of the legislator is to describe and articulate a pre-existing reality, rather than to invent laws *ab initio*. This pre-existing reality must be the essence of the state of which we have been speaking. Given what Marx has written above, it would be natural for him to say that what positive laws must articulate is the collective spirit of the people, or perhaps the freedom, reason and equality inherent in that collective spirit. Thus he says in December 1842: "The legislator, however, should regard himself as a naturalist. He does not *make* the laws, he does not invent them, he only formulates them, expressing in conscious, positive laws the inner laws of spiritual relations."⁷⁴

In turn, when speaking of change over time, we would expect Marx to say that as this spirit develops historically so as to realise freedom and reason more adequately, so laws must change too, in order to articulate the contemporary form of the collective spirit. This would be Hegel's own way of seeing things. There are one or two places where he does speak like this, as when he says in May that "[t]he Belgian revolution is a product of the Belgian spirit."⁷⁵ But towards the end of the year Marx begins to characterise the changing reality that positive law must describe in different ways, for example in November as "the practical life forces"⁷⁶: "[T]he law can only be the ideal, self-conscious image of

⁷³ See Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, Introduction*, 51–56, 119–123.

⁷⁴ *CW* 1, 308; *MEW* 1, 149.

⁷⁵ *CW* 1, 143. This may be the import of a short passage from October 1842 in which Marx says that in feudalism, "The world condition of unfreedom required rights of unfreedom, for whereas human right is the existence of freedom, this animal right is the existence of unfreedom" (*CW* 1, 230; *MEW* 1, 115, t.m.). See also Marx's demand in the 1843 *Critique*, made apparently in his own voice, for "a constitution which contains within itself the determination and principle of advancing in step with consciousness, advancing as actual men advance, which is only possible when 'man' has become the principle of the constitution". (*CW* 3, 19; *MEW* 1, 218; t.m.).

⁷⁶ It may seem odd to the reader that I do not mention here Marx's demand in October 1842 that the law be revised to recognise a "customary right" of the poor to take fallen wood in private forests (*CW* 1, 230ff.). Marx provides some surprising arguments in support of this demand, at one point trying to ground it in the idea that the poor are excluded from civil society in the way that the fallen wood is separated from its tree (*CW* 1, 233), but overall his justification seems to appeal to an idea of human universality and equality, which the poor sense and express in their practice of gathering wood, and this brings it close to the ideas set out above (see especially *CW* 1, 230–231).

actuality, the *theoretical* expression, made independent, of the practical life forces [*Lebensmächte*].”⁷⁷

In December, referring to electoral law, he speaks of the substrate that the law must reflect as “the internal construction of the state,” namely the districts and provinces into which it is divided in practice, and as “state-life”:

We do not demand that in the representation of the people one should abstract from actual and present differences. On the contrary, we demand that one should proceed from the actual differences created and conditioned by the internal construction of the state, and not fall back from state-life into imagined spheres that state-life has already robbed of their significance.⁷⁸

Again in December, Marx argues that the job of the divorce courts is to reflect the underlying truth about whether the relationship between the married partners is alive or dead:

Divorce is nothing but the statement of the fact that the marriage in question is a *dead* marriage, the existence of which is mere semblance and deception. It is obvious that neither the arbitrary will [*Willkür*] of the legislator, nor the arbitrary will of private persons, but only the *essence of the matter* [*das Wesen der Sache*] can decide whether a marriage is dead or not, for it is well known that the *statement* that *death has occurred* depends on the facts, and not on the *desires* of the parties involved. But if, in the case of *physical* death, precise, irrefutable proof is required, is it not clear that the legislator should be allowed to register the fact of an *ethical* death only on the basis of the most indubitable symptoms, since preserving the life of ethical relationships is not only his right, but also his *duty*, the duty of his self-preservation!⁷⁹

Now, what is common to these three passages is Marx’s reference to “life” and “life forces.”⁸⁰ Earlier in the year, in April, Marx had used the idea of “life” to characterise the essence of the state, describing “man’s

⁷⁷ CW 1, 273; Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Karl Marx Friedrich Engels Gesamtausgabe* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1975–) (abbreviated as MEGA), 1/1, 259; t.m.

⁷⁸ CW 1, 296; MEGA 1/1, 276; t.m.

⁷⁹ CW 1, 309; MEW 1, 150; t.m.

⁸⁰ This is particularly noticeable in the third passage when it is compared with Hegel’s comments on divorce in the *Philosophy of Right* (Hegel, *PR*, §176 and A). Marx takes essentially the same stance as Hegel on the permissibility of divorce, but expresses this stance in a vitalist language which is missing in Hegel’s paragraph. Cf. Hegel’s rejection of vitalist language at §211 R. An immediate source for Marx’s vitalist language may have been Savigny, who wrote, for example, that “Right [...] has no existence for itself, its essence is rather the life of man itself, viewed from a particular side”: F. K. von Savigny, “Zum Beruf unsrer Zeit für Gesetzgebung und Rechtswissenschaft” [1814], in J. Stern, ed., *Thibaut und Savigny. Ihre programmatischen Schriften* (München: Franz Vahlen, 1973), 114. I am grateful to James Furner for pointing out this and similar passages to me.

life as a life of freedom” as the basis of laws.⁸¹ But there it was precisely a life *of freedom* that he had in mind, rather than life as such.⁸² In these later cases it is noticeable that “life” and “life-forces” are not presented as intrinsically related to freedom or rationality. Instead their existence and dynamics are left unexplained, as brute facts.⁸³

FREEDOM AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRODUCTIVE FORCES

Most commentators have seen a radical break between the “idealistic” account of law in the Marx of 1842 and the “materialist” account of 1845 and after. If they have seen anticipations of the later Marx in the earlier writings, it is in the ways in which he describes actual legislation as deviating from the “normal” process whereby it would express the essence of the state, because of the way the narrow interests of the propertied classes dictate the outcome of assembly debates.⁸⁴ By contrast here I would like to suggest a more systematic link between Marx’s 1842 and his post-1845 thought. It is that his 1842 conception of the *essence* of the state, that essence of which positive laws are the articulated expression, is the precursor of his later notion of human “productive forces,” of which the “social relations of production” are the expression in his theory of history.

⁸¹ *CW* 1, 162–3, quoted above.

⁸² Other examples of this usage are Marx’s references to “the pulse of a living spirit” (*CW* 1, 140) and “spiritual life” (*CW* 1, 158) in April, and to the “inner life” of the law (*CW* 1, 260) in October. Here it is the life *of a collective spirit* characterised by freedom and rationality that is at issue, rather than life as such. By contrast the “state-life” in the second of three passages quoted in the text above is not presented in this way: the passage is part of an extended analogy between the state and a living organism in which is it the similarities rather than the differences between the two that are emphasised (*CW* 1, 295–7; cf. the formally similar analogy at Hegel, *PR*, §§ 271, 271A, 276A).

⁸³ There is one point earlier in the year, in April, where Marx appeals to the “universal powers of life” without connecting them to any idea of freedom or reason (*CW* 1, 157). It should also be said that in the course of 1842 he occasionally characterises the reality which laws and political institutions should reflect in yet other ways: for example as “human nature” (July; *CW* 1, 199), “the reason of human relations” (July; *CW* 1, 200; *MEW* 1, 103; t.m.), “the rightful nature of things [*Dinge*]” (October; *CW* 1, 227; *MEW* 1, 112; t.m.), the class structure of society (October; *CW* 1, 234), and “ethical and natural forces” (December; *CW* 1, 310).

⁸⁴ Or else, as Marx puts it at one point, because of the effect of relations of a “thinglike nature” that “determine the actions of private persons and individual authorities, and are as independent of them as the method of breathing” (*CW* 1, 337; *MEW* 1, 177; t.m.). These “thinglike relations” seem to anticipate the later concept of social relations of production.

If this is correct, we can see Marx's move in late 1842 from conceiving the essence – or the basis, as we might now begin to call it – of the state in a classically Hegelian way to thinking of it in more vitalist and thus potentially “materialist” terms, a move that he made long before he began his study of political economy, as the starting point in the development of his later theory of history.

In fact, Marx and Engels' very first statement of that theory, at the start of *The German Ideology* of 1845–6, defines its grounding idea of a “mode of production” as a mode of production of *life*, and indeed as a mode of life itself:

The mode in which humans produce their means of life depends first of all on the nature of the means of life themselves that they find in existence and have to reproduce. This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the production of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather it is already a determinate kind of activity of these individuals, a determinate way of expressing their life, a determinate *mode of life* [*Lebensweise*] on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are.⁸⁵

It is this mode of producing as a mode of life that gives rise to a certain division of labour and to a certain form of property and of the state (by which is now meant the centralised governing apparatus),⁸⁶ so that “determinate individuals who are productively active in a determinate way enter into these determinate social and political relations [...] The social structure and the state are continually evolving out of the *life-process* of determinate individuals.”⁸⁷

As Marx clarified his theory, it developed into a three-tier account in which a certain set of “productive forces” (for example, cultivated land, agricultural tools, and technical expertise) and the technical methods of production associated with them entailed a certain “form of intercourse” or set of “social relations of production”⁸⁸ (for example those of

⁸⁵ *CW* 5, 31; *MEW* 3, 21; t.m. Cf. the version of this passage in Marx and Engels' first draft: “[W]e must begin by stating the first premise of all human existence and, therefore, of all history, the premise, namely, that men must be in a position to live in order to be able to “make history”. But life involves before everything else eating and drinking, a habitation, clothing and many other things. The first historical act is thus the production of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself.” (*CW* 5, 41; *MEW* 3, 28)

⁸⁶ *CW* 5, 31–35.

⁸⁷ *CW* 5, 35; *MEW* 3, 25; t.m., my emphasis.

⁸⁸ Marx also uses the expressions “mode of cooperation”, “economic structure” and “form of property” at various points to describe the social relations of production (or, in the last case, their immediate expression).

feudalism or capitalism) with their associated “social structure” or class structure. This in turn entailed a certain legal and political system and also a certain type of consciousness or mentality. Changes in the first tier gave rise to changes in the second and finally in the third. In the account of this theory that has dominated English-language discussion for the past twenty-five years, that of G. A. Cohen, the relationships between these three tiers are functional: sets of relations of production come into and remain in existence because they are currently functional for the development of the productive forces, and legal-political systems and ideologies do the same because they are functional for the maintenance of the current social relations of production.⁸⁹ But there is evidence that instead Marx conceived at least the relationship between the first and second tiers in a way that parallels the relationship between the essence of the state and its positive laws in the simpler model of his 1842 writings. In that model, as I have argued, the relationship is one of “expression and realisation”: Through positive laws the freedom inherent in the collective spirit gains a conscious and objective expression and thereby a genuine existence. This positive law is not an epiphenomenon of the freedom inherent in the collective spirit but an essential component of this freedom in its realised form. Similarly, in *The German Ideology* Marx and Engels describe the different tiers of society as “moments,” or integral components, of a single totality,⁹⁰ and in particular they tend to see the mode of production and the form of intercourse of society in these terms. To take one example, they say that “a certain mode of production, or industrial stage, is always combined with a certain mode of cooperation, or social stage, and this mode of cooperation is itself a ‘productive force.’”⁹¹ This implies that the full realisation of the mode of production is made possible only by the corresponding mode of cooperation, or form of intercourse.

In short, my suggestion is that the productive forces in Marx’s later theory of history are a descendant, via the idea of “life,” of the essence of the state in the 1842 writings, and that the relationship between the productive forces and the social relations of production is a descendant

⁸⁹ G. A. Cohen, *Karl Marx’s Theory of History: A Defence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).

⁹⁰ For example at *CW* 5, 41–45. See also Olufemi Taiwo, *Legal Naturalism: A Marxist Theory of Law* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996), 57–60.

⁹¹ *CW* 5, 43; *MEW* 3 30; t.m.

of that between the essence of the state and positive law in 1842 and inherits the “expressivist” character of that relationship.⁹²

Even if this is accepted, it may be said that Marx’s later theory of history departs fundamentally from his 1842 views in that an explanation of the social relations of production, and thus of the laws and political form, of a given society from its productive forces and methods of production cannot serve at once as a *justification* of those social relations of production, in the way that the explanation of positive laws from freedom and reason of the collective spirit could in the earlier model, for the existence of these forces and methods, unlike that of freedom and reason, is simply a factual circumstance with no particular value status. In the light of this fundamental change, whatever structural parallels there may be between the earlier and later models would be of little interest.

However, we should remember that Marx’s theory of history is one in which the *development* of the productive forces and associated methods of production is crucial: In it new relations of production are always brought into existence because the productive forces have developed to a point where the old relations of production have become in some way a “fetter” on their development. Furthermore, production is itself human activity, and the development of the productive forces and of the associated methods of production is simultaneously the development of human powers to *act*.⁹³ So when a set of social relations of production or “form of intercourse” fetters the development of the productive forces, it is also fettering the development of human activity, and its replacement brings into existence a set of relations of production which better facilitates that development:

These various conditions, which appear first as conditions of self-activity, later as fetters upon it, form in the whole historical development a connected series of forms of intercourse, the connection between which consists in this: in the place of an earlier form of intercourse, which has become a fetter, a new one is put, corresponding to the more developed productive forces and, hence, to the advanced mode of self-activity of individuals – a form which in its turn becomes a

⁹² See note 25 above. Taylor applies the idea of expressivism to Marx’s thought as a whole but not specifically to his theory of productive forces and social relations of production (Taylor, *Hegel*, 547–558).

⁹³ Marx’s term *Produktivkraft* is standardly translated into English as “productive force”, but it is also the term Marx uses in 1844 to translate Adam Smith’s notion of the “productive powers of labour”, meaning the labourer’s capacity to produce. See Marx’s excerpts from Smith in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (CW 3, 253, 258, 262; MEW Erg. 1, 491, 496, 502).

fetter and is then replaced by another. Since these conditions correspond at every stage to the simultaneous development of the productive forces [*Produktivkräfte*], their history is at the same time the history of the self-developing productive forces taken over by each new generation, and is, therefore, the history of the development of the powers [*Kräfte*] of the individuals themselves.⁹⁴

Here it is possible to see Marx's 1842 idea of laws as the "actual existence of humans as free"⁹⁵ reborn in a new, developmental shape, with the series of successive forms of intercourse playing the same realisatory role for human "self-activity" that positive laws did for human freedom in 1842. If we can take "self-activity" as a basic value, this means that that explanation can after all join hands with justification in Marx's later theory of history.⁹⁶ Of course here a form of intercourse is only relatively justified, as enabling the realisation of human self-activity more adequately than the one it has replaced. But the justification can become absolute with the advent of that "form of intercourse" (if we can still call it that) which will place no fetters at all on the development of human self-activity and will enable the "free development" of all: namely communism.⁹⁷

There is no room to develop the view of Marx's later theory of history and of its connection with his 1842 writings that has been suggested here.⁹⁸ However, if it is sound it shows that Marx's shift at the end of 1842 towards thinking of the basis of the state in terms of "life" does not after

⁹⁴ *CW* 5, 82; *MEW* 3, 72; t.m.

⁹⁵ *CW* 1, 162–3, quoted above.

⁹⁶ It is worth noting that Cohen himself pointed to the parallel between the development of spirit in Hegel's theory of history and the development of the productive forces in Marx's (Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History*, 1–27).

⁹⁷ Communist society is "the only society in which the original and free development of individuals ceases to be a mere phrase" (*CW* 5 439; *MEW* 3, 424; t.m.). R. N. Berki, "Through and through Hegel: Marx's road to communism", *Political Studies* 38 (1990), 670, has argued that the "true state" in Marx's 1842 writings, the state in so far as it properly realises human freedom and reason, is the model for his later notion of communism: so here my suggestions about Marx's theory of history mesh with Berki's about the culminating point of that theory.

⁹⁸ It is worth distinguishing these suggestions from the argument of Taiwo's *Legal Naturalism*, the only work I know of which argues for a deep continuity between Marx's 1842 theory of law and his later theory of history. Taiwo takes a somewhat similar view to my own about the nature of the relationship between productive forces and social relations of production (see note 91 above). However his claim about the link between the earlier and later Marx is that the relationship between the "natural law of human reason" and positive laws in 1842 provides the model for the relationship between the laws that are intrinsic to a mode of production (by which he means a set of productive forces and methods together with the set of social relations of production through which these are realised) and positive laws in the later theory of history (Taiwo, *Legal Naturalism*, 28–33, 55, 62–70). Thus Taiwo sees the 1842 relationship as anticipating that between the

all represent an abandonment of an underlying idea of freedom as the ultimate ground of social and political institutions. In the *German Ideology* Marx and Engels retrieve the idea of freedom *within* the “life process,” rather than in counterposition to it: a freedom that is immanent in the human life process insofar as it is a process of producing life rather than merely living it.⁹⁹ If we can locate in that 1842 move towards the language of life the starting point for Marx’s differentiation from his fellow Left Hegelians, we can also see the theory of history that eventually resulted from it as one that still carries its Hegelian origins at its heart.

first-and-second and the third tiers in Marx’s later theory, whereas I see it as anticipating that between the first and the second tiers.

⁹⁹ See Marx’s equation of freedom with productive life in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*: “productive life is species-life. It is life-creating life. The whole character of a species, its species-character, lies in its mode of life activity, and free conscious activity is the species-character of man” (CW 3, 276; MEWErg. 1, 516). On the idea of immanent freedom, see also Marx’s demand in the *Doctoral Dissertation* for “freedom in existence [*Dasein*]” as opposed to “freedom from existence”: for a freedom that can “shine in the light of existence” (CW 1, 62; MEGA 1/1, 47; t.m.).

Marx and Feuerbachian Essence

Returning to the Question of “Human Essence” in Historical Materialism

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This paper is part of a larger effort to present what I would call the “unsaid” – or some of what is “unsaid” – in Karl Marx’s theory.¹ By this I am referring to a certain philosophical background made up of presuppositions that are not always completely explicit. This is not an attempt to expose “what Marxism really is,” because I believe there is no such thing in the absolutely univocal sense. Instead, I am attempting to view Marx in another light, principally in regard to the self-representation that Marxism has built up for itself – to view it, in fact, from the basis of a given spirit of (our) time, at the beginning of a new century. I do not presume that a theory can exist without philosophical presuppositions or commitments. The point here is to try to avoid being naïve regarding the presuppositions that may be assumed even when seeking to approach Marx’s theory in a renewed and anti-dogmatic manner.

Particularly in this paper, I want to show a certain permanence, re-elaboration, and consequent “strengthening” in Marx’s critical theory of 1845–6, of the originally Feuerbachian notion of a “communitarian” essence of man – with all the weight that this notion of essence has, among other things, for the definition of concepts like alienation. The Marxian re-elaboration of the Feuerbachian notion of “species-essence”

¹ Most of that effort has been presented in two of books of mine, published in Brazil: *A Questão da Individualidade. a Crítica do Humano e do Social na Polêmica Stirner-Marx* (São Paulo: Edunicamp, 1994), and *Ascensão e Queda do Sujeito no Movimento Jovem-Hegelian* (Salvador: Edufba, 1992). I thank Andrew Chitty for his comments on a first English draft, Douglas Moggach for his proposed formulations in the text, and Helen Sabrina Gledhill for diligently revising the English translation.

(*Gattungswesen*) occurs primarily in Marx's well-known "Theses on Feuerbach," and the first section, "Feuerbach," of the *German Ideology* (a collaborative work by Marx and Engels).² Besides attempting a close reading of these texts, I will propose, as an additional support for my interpretation, a re-contextualisation of them in the Left Hegelian movement that Marx is precisely challenging. My analysis is not to resuscitate the decades-old debates on the positions of Louis Althusser, the putative break between a philosophical and a scientific Marx, but to pose the question of the objectivity of the social bond. A critique of the Marxian viewpoint will depend on responses to the following question: To what problems raised by his philosophical contemporaries does the Marxian idea of essence, as the dialectical process of becoming, realised in social/socialised man, provide an answer? The larger question, to what extent are we (still) willing to understand the world of social relations (or relations of production), viewed as a whole, as *the* true, common, and objective human "essence," or as an adequate depiction of the social bond, can only be alluded to here, but contextualising Marx's own reply will help us to see the fundamental issues involved.

In his preface to the second edition (1843) of *The Essence of Christianity*, Feuerbach says he accepts being considered "an idealist in the region of practical – i.e. moral and political – philosophy," because (like Kant) he believes in the final victory of good in the future. "To me," he writes, "'the Idea' is only faith in the historical future, in the triumph of truth and virtue." That victory might only take place in the "next century," but what might be "centuries in individual life are days in the life of humanity."³ Feuerbach's scale is not the "individual life"; nor indeed is Marx's. However, Marx is definitely not willing to leave practical philosophy – and that is what is at stake here – in the terrain of idealism. In that respect, he will criticise what he considers to be Feuerbach's idealism, but he will

² Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* [1845–6] (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968); in German: *Die deutsche Ideologie*, *Marx Engels Werke*, vol. 3 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1958), 8–530. I will refer to *The German Ideology* as *GI*, and to the German text as *DI*. For the "Theses on Feuerbach," I will refer to the same two editions, where they appear respectively on pages 669–2, and 5–7.

³ Ludwig Feuerbach, *Das Wesen des Christentums* [1841/1843], *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 5 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1984), 15: "Ich bin Idealist nur auf dem Gebiete der praktischen Philosophie." The English translation of the text: *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. George Eliot (New York: Harper, 1957).

also condemn Feuerbachian “highly restricted sensualism” (sensationalism) as “confined” (*beschränkt*) materialism,⁴ even while he defends it rhetorically, as an audacious amorality, against their common idealist adversaries.

Bruno Bauer and Max Stirner, also members of the Hegelian left, publicly criticised Feuerbach, before Marx did, for his indecisive, “unearthly” materialism and “religious” outlook.⁵ Marx, however, prefers to suggest that such criticism is mostly a conservative and moralist attack on a quasi-libidinous hedonism. He goes on to depict Feuerbach’s sensualism as if it could represent – and this was the motive he attributes to Bruno Bauer’s reaction – the “lust of the eye” and “of the flesh.” Accordingly, Marx characterised Feuerbach and his close followers as almost complete libertines.⁶ He prefers to pretend that these were the main accusations to which his ally Feuerbach was being subjected, although it was very much the opposite. Bauer is saying that Feuerbachian man is “religious,” “emasculated,” “dependent,” and “slavish”⁷; that, just like Hegel’s Absolute Spirit, Feuerbach’s species essence (*Gattungswesen*) and his “Man” (*Mensch*) are “a hypostasis,” “a new God” of a new religion.⁸ As for Max Stirner, likewise, “to God, Feuerbach gives the name ‘our Essence’.” Feuerbach represents a restoration of Christianity in the form of a cult of Man as amorous, communitarian “species-essence,” Man who is the true ideal and new “supreme being” of modern times.⁹

⁴ “Feuerbach’s ‘conception’ of the sensuous world is confined . . . to the mere contemplation [*Anschauung*; also intuition] of it” (*GI* 57, *DI* 42). As to Feuerbach’s “highly restricted way” to “recognise sensuousness,” see *GI*, 106, *DI* 87.

⁵ Bruno Bauer, “Charakteristik Ludwig Feuerbachs,” *Wigands Vierteljahrschrift*, vol. 3, Leipzig, 1845, 102–23 *passim*; Max Stirner, *The Ego and His Own* (New York: Boni and Liveright, n.d.), 33–4, 50; in German: *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* [1845] (Stuttgart: Philip Reclam, 1981), 34, 50. The first is the main Bauerian text that the *German Ideology* (section “Saint Bruno”) is directed against. The second is the object of attack in the very large section “Saint Max.”

⁶ *GI* 106–7, *DI* 87.

⁷ Bauer, “Charakteristik,” 105, 109, 110. Marx himself quotes Bauer on this issue (*GI* 105, *DI* 85), as well as on his saying that “Feuerbach is a materialist . . . who is unable to hold out on to the earth . . . but wants to spiritualise himself [*sich vergeistigen*] and rise to heaven” (*GI* 109, *DI* 89). On the other hand, Marx complains, “Bruno by no means attacks the highly restricted [*höchst bornierte*] way in which Feuerbach recognises sensuousness.” (*GI* 106, *DI* 87).

⁸ Bauer, “Charakteristik,” 104, 105, 110. Bauer criticises Feuerbach’s essence – as “substance” – from the point of view of the autonomous subject and creative “personality.”

⁹ Stirner, *Ego*, 33–4, 50; *Der Einzige*, 34, 50–1. “With the strength of despair Feuerbach clutches at the total substance of Christianity” (34). Practically Stirner’s whole book is an attack – in the name of the irreducible uniqueness of the individual – on Feuerbachian

What then, we may now ask, does Marx himself find to criticise in Feuerbach? Could his criticism have been levelled in the name of real, concrete, individual man, against Feuerbach's communitarian essence as a "hypostasis," an abstract and alienating "generality" (*Allgemeinheit*)? Marx would agree with neither "*idealism*" nor "*pure materialism*"; he sided with "*practical materialism*," for which it is a matter of "revolutionising the existing world, of practically attacking and changing existing things" (*GI* 57, *DI* 42). Of course, he says, in Feuerbach we would find a similar point of view, but only in "isolated surmises that have much too little influence on his general outlook" (*ibid.*). Marx then goes on to criticise Feuerbach's view mainly regarding two interrelated points. The first is its contemplative or passive aspect,¹⁰ to which Marx counterposes the activist and transforming conception according to which man and the world itself are "*sensuous activity*" (*GI* 59, *DI* 44).¹¹ As for the second point, Marx will say that Feuerbach "never arrives at the really existing active men, but stops at the abstraction 'Man'" (*ibid.*). And it is because of this that some believe that here Marx, as a more accomplished materialist, is defending the "corporeal," "true," "existing" individual and setting aside Man and the notion of a species-essence of mankind. Nonetheless, there is good reason to claim that Marx orients his anti-Feuerbachian criticism in favour, not of the empirical individual, but precisely of "species man" – for him, the framework within which one can come effectively to apprehend "real," as opposed to abstract, individuals (*GI* 59, *DI* 44). In fact, he will argue, following that remark, that the humanist notion of essence "knows no other 'human relationships' of 'man to man' than love and friendship, and even then idealised" (*ibid.*). In other words, what Marx means to say is that the ties that bind human beings together – and constitute their "essence" – are much more objective

Man as the accomplished expression of the new "ideal" and "alienation" that, after the Christian God, still alienates and oppresses men in modern times. I analyze in detail the opposition between Stirner and Marx (and Feuerbach) in my *Questão da Individualidade* (note 1).

¹⁰ Prior to Marx, this characteristic of Feuerbachianism was expressly criticised by Bruno Bauer – according to whom the human essence in Feuerbach is beyond the "influence and activity" of men. Bruno Bauer, "The Genus and the Crowd" [1844], *The Young Hegelians. An Anthology*, ed. L. Stepelevich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 201.

¹¹ According to Marx, man is not just a "*sensuous object*" but "*sensuous activity*" (*GI* 59, *DI* 44; see also Marx's first thesis on Feuerbach). This last expression, however, can already be found in Feuerbach himself, as in his 1843 preface to the *Essence of Christianity* (*Wesen*, 15).

and material than Feuerbach imagines.¹² And it is necessary that they should be so, to prevent Bauer and Stirner from “dissolving” them with their – for Marx – “subjectivist” and “voluntarist” critiques, which radicalise the claims of the self-governing and not-so-communitarian modern individual.

Let us start with the first point. The idea of a philosophy of praxis and an activist conception of humanity preceded Marx in the heart of the Hegelian left, but is particularly absent from Feuerbachian thinking. Now, apparently pressured by the attacks by Bauer and Stirner, Marx will denounce the passivity and conformism found in Feuerbach’s philosophy, which disqualify it for serving as a basis for a socially critical and transforming posture.¹³ According to Marx, that passivity and conformism stemmed both from Feuerbach’s idealism *and* from his “narrow” materialism¹⁴; curiously enough, perhaps even more from the latter, that is, “contemplative (*anschauende*) materialism,” than from the former.

Passive and sensualist Feuerbachian materialism did not satisfy Marx because it failed to perceive that the objective world is not “a thing given direct from eternity but a “historical product,” “a result of industry and of the state of society,” “of the activity of a whole succession of generations” (*GI* 57, *DI* 42). And this also holds true for the essence of man, as we will see. What we have here, then, is Marx’s materialist version of the understanding of the world or the object as something that has been “produced” or “posited,” an understanding that had previously been developed, abstractly, by idealism.¹⁵ However, Marx views such activity as being expressly “physical,” “sensuous,” “material.” This activity is “production,” and not “creation,” we might add, because the “active man” in this Marxian representation of the world is not really a “creative” individual

¹² Feuerbach states that “only love, admiration, veneration, in short, only passion [*Affekt*] makes the individual into the species,” in “Towards a Critique of Hegelian Philosophy” [1839], in *The Young Hegelians*, ed. Stepelevich, 97.

¹³ In this regard, it must be admitted that the conceptions of the “idealists” Bruno Bauer and Max Stirner are much more activist and critical than Feuerbach’s. In 1844, Bauer was already calling attention to the “resignation,” “apathy,” and “surrender” that characterise Feuerbach’s viewpoint (Bauer, “The Genus and the Crowd,” 201).

¹⁴ As to the possibility that Feuerbach’s philosophy is both idealist and materialist, we should notice for instance his own statement in the preface of 1843 (with which we began our argument), and also Marx’s saying that “as far as Feuerbach is a materialist he does not deal with history, and as far as he considers history he is not a materialist,” and that, before crude social reality, Feuerbach “relapses into idealism” (*GI* 59–60, *DI* 44).

¹⁵ Like Hegel in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Marx – *mutatis mutandis* – believes that what is seen as “something external,” the world, is the result of human activity and not a “thing in and of itself.”

à la Bauer or Stirner, but what we could call *homo faber*.¹⁶ We act on the world, but not in conditions of our own choosing, and our acts exhibit the patterns of necessity and objective causality.

The problem, however, is not simply that Feuerbach has a static understanding of the world. It is rather that, on the basis of his “narrow” – static – conception, he fails to undertake an effective criticism of the existing conditions of life (*GI* 59, *DI* 44). Certainly, he sees a reality that goes against his “consciousness” and “feeling,” and which does not correspond to the general “harmony” he presupposes (*GI* 57).¹⁷ In such cases, however, the humanist Feuerbach will set aside the sensualist view in favour of another, “superior” and “philosophical” view, that can still perceive, behind the ugly reality, a compensatory species-essence and the essential unity of the human species (*GI* 54–5).¹⁸ According to Marx, however, that reality is a sign that species and essence do not yet truly exist, except virtually (as a potential), and as negated within the prevailing “inhuman” relations – that is, materially, in poverty, inequality, mutual indifference, and competition. Feuerbach “relapses into idealism at the very point where the communist materialist sees the necessity and at the same time the condition of a transformation both of industry and of society” (*GI* 59, *DI* 44).

In the final analysis, Feuerbach both “accepts” and “sublimates” existing reality rather than choosing to “attack” and “change” it practically. He criticises and opposes reality much less vigorously than do other young Hegelians like Max Stirner and Bruno Bauer, who get involved in a direct

¹⁶ Resembling a demiurge, like Plato’s *demiourgos*, the craftsman who makes (engenders) the cosmos by using preexisting matter and coping with necessity (*Timaeus*); and not without similarities to the demiurge of the Gnostics. Marx’s materialism conceives the world surrounding human beings, their milieu, as the result of industry and commercial intercourse, thus progressively less and less purely natural (“except perhaps on a few Australian coral islands of recent origin”). “Of course” – Marx is quick to add – “in all this the priority of external nature remains unassailed” (*GI* 55, 57, 59, *DI* 41, 42, 44). My reference to the “creative individual” includes both Bauer’s and Stirner’s views on human activity, implying the idea of personal creation (even if differently conceived), of which Marx was highly critical.

¹⁷ Marx is referring to material poverty and its moral repercussions, the mere mention of which always sparked his lively indignation.

¹⁸ “When Feuerbach sees a crowd of scrofulous, overworked and consumptive starvelings”, says Marx, “he is compelled to take refuge in the ‘higher perception’ and in the ideal ‘compensation’ in the species” (*GI* 59, *DI* 44). Before Marx, Bruno Bauer had already said that in Feuerbach’s species “the contradictions in which history has gone astray are hushed up,” for Feuerbach’s “essence has not been able to heal the damages – but for compensation it spreads a mantle out over the wounds” (Bauer, “The Genus and the Crowd,” 201).

and radical attack on existing politics and society. Through his conception of species and essence as “nature” – we could say, as a given and a presupposition, and not, in Hegelian terms, as a result – Feuerbach is basically reconciled with existing reality. By idealising reality, he sees the human essence where it does not (yet) “truly” exist; or, to be more precise, he does not seek that essence where it is actually negated (although it is also produced/engendered, present in its becoming). And he does not put himself in a position to participate actively in its “production” through the radical, practical, material critique and transformation of the prevailing “inhuman” relations.

Now that species-man and community (*Gemeinschaft*) are ideas attacked by the “subjectivised” Hegelianism of Bruno Bauer¹⁹ and by the voluntaristic individualism of Max Stirner (in the final analysis, by alternative versions of modern subjectivity), Marx takes on the task of absorbing and solidly establishing the dimension of the ideal – “species” and “essence” – in the material world. The incomplete materialism of Feuerbach – as well as his idealism – does not adequately serve that purpose.²⁰ This seems to be one of Marx’s main concerns in his “Theses on Feuerbach,” which preceded what *The German Ideology* would say slightly later. The “Theses” are a critique of “all hitherto existing materialism,” and their general perspective conceives the world as “*human sensuous activity*,” acknowledging activity and movement in that world, the object thereby broadened as a unity of subject and object. Consequently, Marx can contrast Bauer’s creative universal self-consciousness (*Selbstbewusstsein*) and Stirner’s creative unique individual from the point of view of the productive and collective praxis of mankind. And he can represent that praxis in such a way – as an objective/material process – that any transcendence of it by the individual subject is now entirely empty. According to Marx, until then materialism had not been able to apprehend reality “*as practice*,” in other words, “*subjectively*,” as he says. That is why the active-subjective aspect that corresponds to human activity had been developed by idealism.²¹

¹⁹ “Real humanism” – Marx’s name, up to 1845, for Feuerbachian philosophy – “has no worse enemy in Germany than spiritualism or speculative idealism,” says Marx in the preface to the *Holy Family* (7), referring precisely to Bruno Bauer’s philosophy: *The Holy Family* [1845], *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels Collected Works*, vol. 4 (New York: International Publishers, 1976).

²⁰ As we already know by now, according to Marx, Feuerbach’s “*anschauende*” philosophical outlook is narrow and passive, as materialism, and relapses into idealism when it comes to understanding and assessing human essence and social historical realities.

²¹ Idealism, however, has always viewed the active-subjective dimension of reality “*abstractly*,” says Marx, as it was unaware of human activity as sensuous/material (first thesis).

For Marx, the world surrounding man can now be conceived as man's "creature," although not in the idealistic sense; besides, if that world is "created" by man, it is also that man's "creator."²²

In his "Theses," following this – shall we say – attenuated "subjectification" of the object, Marx attempts to achieve what is mostly an "objectification" of subjects and their activity, as well as their essence. Feuerbach, says Marx, conceives of objects as "distinct from thought," but he does not view human activity itself as being objective. Therefore, "he regards the theoretical attitude as the only genuinely human attitude, while practice is conceived and fixed only in its dirty-Judaical [*sic*] manifestation" (first thesis). In other words, for Feuerbach, practice does not respect the object (or nature) in its objectivity and sovereignty.²³ So, while replacing "abstract thinking" with "sensuous intuition [*Anschauung*]," Feuerbach still does not want to reduce sensuous and material reality – which he would rather conceive passively as "nature" – to "*practical, human-sensuous activity*" (fifth thesis).

Here we arrive at what really interests us. With that perspective, the "empiricist" materialism of Feuerbach, no matter what he intended, corresponds – according to Marx – to the view (*Anschauung*) "of single individuals and of civil society" (ninth thesis). With his contrasting "new materialism," Marx is seeking the standpoint of "*human (menschliche) society*" or "*social (vergesellschaftete) humanity*" (tenth thesis)²⁴ – and not that of civil society.²⁵ Therefore, rather than merely seeking an active, transforming point of view, Marx is seeking a "communist" and truly "human" (or "humane") standpoint. When he declares in his eleventh thesis that

²² In the particular sense that circumstances (no longer "purely natural," but historical, encompassing social relationships and intercourse) are the result of human actions throughout generations (but not – so far – a conscious and deliberate result), and, on the other hand, they shape and transform – make – human beings into what they are at a certain point in history, therefore being truly their "essence."

²³ This critical observation by Marx regarding a "*non-Jewish*" and "*clean*" practice is very symptomatic. For Feuerbach, the practical point of view corresponds to a "*selfish*," "*egotistical*" subjectivity, while a "*theoretical*" and "*aesthetic*" vision recognises the object as "*sovereign*" and "*divine*" (Feuerbach, *Wesen*, 316 and 205–7). The practical point of view allegedly incorporated the principle of Judaism (and civil society) in which the world (and society) appear as "*means*" towards personal ends (207ff). It is regarding this argument that Karl Marx feels obliged to explain his new practical standpoint in the first thesis.

²⁴ I believe "*socialised*" would be a better rendering of the German *vergesellschaftete* here.

²⁵ Marx's general idea here is that, in relying basically on "*contemplative*" senses to apprehend that which is real and essential, one is limited to what the senses provide, a reality captured "statically" (not historically and dialectically, in its becoming) – in the case that concerns us here, "*isolated*," "*independent*" human individuals, outside their "essential" material relations and history.

“the point is to change the world,” he has already established what kind of changing is to be pursued (and, according to him, is already objectively under way). This is what we read in the “Theses,” and, as we shall see, the viewpoint stated by Marx (and Engels) in the first section of the *German Ideology* is no different.

When contemplating species-essence ideally and sentimentally, Feuerbach seems to take acceptance of the sensuous reality to the point of finding the very essence of each being in the naturally given world. Actually, Feuerbach “accepts” and adjusts himself to that reality when he embraces the notion that the “existence” or “being” (*Sein*) of an object or animal is equal to its “essence” (*Wesen*), when he accepts that the actual conditions of a person’s life are those which satisfy – and correspond to – his or her essence (*GI* 55, *DI* 41). Thus, says Marx, if the proletarians reject their current conditions of life as unsatisfactory (in other words, if their “existence” does not seem to coincide with their “essence”), according to Feuerbach, these unsatisfactory conditions would be an “abnormality” and “unhappy chance,” an “unavoidable misfortune, which must be borne quietly” (*ibid.*). Marx certainly believes this is not the case; nor is it the belief of the “proletarians and communists” who “will prove this in time, when they bring their ‘existence’ into harmony with their essence in a practical way, by means of a revolution” (*ibid.*). Again according to Marx, a being’s existence, man’s, his conditions of life, can *universally* diverge from (and indeed *negate*) his true essence (in becoming). Therefore, revolution appears, dialectically speaking, as the negation of that negation, and as the “realisation” of man’s essence.

In Feuerbach’s text on existence and essence to which Marx is referring, he is expressly criticising traditional metaphysics, and it is to this end that he criticises the classical distinction of those two notions (existence and essence) as an opposition that could arise only in abnormal and unfortunate cases.²⁶ Actually, in relation to this, it could be understood that, more than Feuerbach, Marx, through his materialist conception of history, wishes to preserve and accentuate the distinction between essence

²⁶ In 1843, Feuerbach claims that “all beings – except cases that are against nature – like to be where they are and what they are. That is, their essence is not separate from their existence, nor their existence from their essence.” “It is in human life that being is apart from essence, but only in abnormal and unfortunate cases” (“Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft” [1843], *Ludwig Feuerbach, Werke in sechs Bänden*, vol.3, tome II [Berlin, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1975], 288; in English, *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Manfred Vogel [Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1975]).

and existence (except for their “dialectical connection,” in *becoming*) to provide a more solid foundation for his social theory as radically critical. According to Marx, what Feuerbach says could be true for the material world as nature, but today, thanks to industry, the field in which Feuerbach can discuss mere anomalies “is steadily shrinking” (GI 55, DI 41). Marx believes that we must recognise (without giving up materialism’s “priority of external nature,” of course) that today, “even the objects of the simplest ‘sensuous certainty’ are only given [to us] through social development, industry and commercial intercourse” (GI 57, DI 42). Feuerbach claims that the “essence” of the fish is simply its existence, water, its milieu; but it would not be possible to hold that to be true after the river has been canalised, polluted by industry and navigated by steamships, and so on (GI 55, DI 41). Stating that all these abnormal circumstances are merely “*unhappy chance*,” “*unavoidable misfortune*,” and “*abnormality*,” complains Marx, would be tantamount to an apology for conformism. On the contrary, from the activist/communist point of view of the authors of the *German Ideology*, in the case of men, what remains to be done is struggle to end the division of labour, which is the “milieu” that mutilates them and frustrates the realisation of community. In fact, according to Marx, the proletarians were already doing just that, as millions of them were now simply “*communists*.”

From Marx’s standpoint, the being of man, his existence, is not the same as his essence. And the divergence between the two things in class society is much more than simply an accidental abnormality. Although at a certain point Marx tries to translate the difference between essence and existence as being simply what takes place between an unsatisfactory material situation and a practically pursued satisfaction, he actually gives an extraordinary significance to the elimination of that divergence. When rejecting Feuerbach for practical and theoretical reasons, he finds a perfect “empirical” translation for the philosophical distinction between being (existence) and essence (what should be; the ideal): Pressed by needs that their reality prevents them from satisfying, men desire another reality that can satisfy them. But we may wonder whether the quotation marks with which Marx astutely sets off the terms “existence” and “essence” in the *German Ideology* unburdens them of their traditional philosophical reach. Here the distinction is not simply between what one (empirically) has and what one (empirically) desires, but a theoretical – or metaphysical – distinction to be made in terms of “existence,” which is contingent, and “essence,” which is true and universal.

With or without quotation marks, essence is what one *should* be, what one *should* want, or what one wants and is *deep down*, representing indeed one's *perfection*.

We know Marx believes that, in his view of the world as sensuous activity, in his active materialism, "every profound philosophical problem is resolved . . . quite simply, into an empirical fact" (GI 58, DI 43). The opposition we are dealing with here is clearly one such problem. Along these lines, Marx comes to see the overcoming of dissatisfaction with current conditions of life as the inauguration of a radically different situation among human beings, involving the end of the division of labour and the formation of a community worthy of the name. His view of the world as sensuous activity therefore has to do with an optimistic defence of a real – not merely ideal – encounter between humanity and its supposed communitarian or social essence (in Hegelian terms, its "concept"), and with a defence of that encounter as an absolutely radical change in the presently existing conditions of life.

Feuerbach goes as far as understanding that man, too, is a "*sensuous object*," but to the extent that he fails to perceive man as *sensuous activity*" also, his man runs the risk of being a supra-sensuous object, a mere *ens* of reason or sentiment. This is the second point in Marx's criticism, presented in relation to the first. By remaining at the level of the immediately sensuous, at the level of contemplation/intuition (*Anschauung*), our humanist apprehends men only in isolation, and not in the "*social connection*" and "*conditions of life*" that make them "*what they are*" (GI 59, DI 44). Here, as we have seen, Marx's main complaint is not that thereby Feuerbach fails to arrive at "*the true, individual, corporeal man*" (ibid.). First and foremost, it is that this empiricist or sensualist point of departure will never allow us to arrive decisively at "species man" and "human society," in other words the realisation of the communitarian/social essence of man. Therefore, it can be understood that Marx as practical materialist is certainly not approaching the single, existing individual in his critique of Feuerbach. On the contrary, he is criticising him for embracing what is still – for Marx – an empiricist and individualist "ontology" that coincides with the abominable viewpoint of modern civil society. Unlike his earlier views, Marx concludes by 1845 that Feuerbach's original conception of species-essence does not provide a sufficiently solid grounding for socialism (as what could be considered the realisation of the social essence of man). We could say that Feuerbach's man is not yet sufficiently "species-man," not sufficiently social and generic for Marx's radical revolutionary communism.

Starting from “individual, corporeal man,” Feuerbach seems to rely on nothing but the bonds of love and friendship to constitute communitarian man and his essence (*GI* 59, *DI* 44).²⁷ Marx, however, sees that in the final analysis these remain only “spiritual” and “philosophical” ties, which Stirner and Bauer have already proven capable of challenging (and, in their view, dissolving) in the name of the “self-conscious” individual. Once one adopts Feuerbach’s standpoint, individuals – even if they interrelate – will be conceived as separate/independent, both from their context and from each other, maintaining a – for Marx – regrettable “transcendence” and “otherness.” On the contrary, according to Marx’s new standpoint, individuals are already solidly linked among themselves to start with – no matter what their awareness, will, or feeling. They are linked by ties, constituted by their “species activity” (that is, by relations of production), which constitute them in turn. Better yet, such individuals do not “have” or “constitute” the ties between them, but they “are had” and “constituted” by these ties; and that is why these ties are their “essence,” in this new, dynamic, and objective sense. In Marx’s words, “from the start . . . there exists a materialist connection of men with one another,” which “is ever taking on new forms,” “independently of any political or religious nonsense which would specially hold them together” (*GI* 41, *DI* 30).

Thus, we can understand that, in Marx’s view, what is not conceived as sufficiently “real,” “material,” in Feuerbach is not the singular individuals, but precisely their “species-essence” and “human ties” – and that is Marx’s main criticism. That is why, in the moral domain, Feuerbach is still ambiguously idealistic, or merely altruistic. He will be simply an altruist – impotently so, as Marx and Engels will say – because of sentiment and consciousness, starting out, as it seems to Marx, from the ontologically singular and disconnected individual. As for Marx, in the *German Ideology* he continues to wage a fierce war against this modern, “isolated” – therefore “egotistical” – individual (as previously in “The Jewish Question” and *The Holy Family*) who “illusorily” conceives himself to be an “atom” or “monad.” Marx now has a much more elaborate and consistent theoretical framework for disqualifying such an individual. Marx complains that Feuerbach speaks of “Man,” “instead of ‘real historical men’” (*GI* 57, 42). In fact, it is precisely within the framework of the productive, species activity of history that Marx will firmly establish “species-man.” Situated outside of history, Feuerbachian sensuous apprehension offers us what,

²⁷ See note 12.

for Marx, is an abstract man, who is extrinsic to his own context, to his concrete, material relations. Within history, Marx seeks to put an end to man's otherness towards others and to his "separateness" and "transcendence" towards his conditions and social relationships – that is, his milieu.

How, then, we may finally ask, does "species-essence" remain – transformed – in Marx's thought of 1845–6? What fate does he assign to Feuerbach's "humane" and "communitarian" essence? Any conclusive consideration in this regard must examine the controversial sixth thesis "*ad Feuerbach*," in which Marx insists that this essence "*is not something abstract, immanent to each individual*" but "*the ensemble of social relations*." A great deal of stress has been placed on the novelty of this proposition, particularly by those who, like Althusser, want to attest to Marx's total abandonment of "Man" and "essence" in 1845. Nevertheless, the sixth thesis seems, at least in part, to simply resume an idea already expressed in a typical essay of his philosophical youth, in which "*man is the world of man, state, society*."²⁸ The thesis could also be simply taken to be a return to Feuerbach's own suggestion that the essence of a fish is inseparable from its environment, water, and so on.²⁹ However, in the sixth thesis Marx insists that the author of *The Essence of Christianity* is led, by his misunderstandings, "*to presuppose an abstract – isolated – human individual*," and therefore to conceive essence "only as 'genus' [or species, *Gattung*], as an internal, dumb generality (*Allgemeinheit*) which naturally unites the many individuals."

It is interesting to note that Feuerbach does state on several occasions, as Marx would like, that man's essence is not something that resides in the isolated individual. He claims, for example, that "the State is the realised, cultivated, explicit totality of the human essence."³⁰ He very clearly declares that "the essence of man is contained only in the community and unity of man with man."³¹ It is true that, in Feuerbach, the community that should constitute "Man" sometimes shrinks considerably, besides

²⁸ Marx, "A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right'" [1843], in *The Young Hegelians*, ed. Stepelevich, 310.

²⁹ "The fish is in the water but one cannot separate its essence from that being," wrote Feuerbach in his *Principles* (*Grundsätze*, §27, 288–9).

³⁰ Ludwig Feuerbach, "Provisional Theses for the Reformation of Philosophy" (1843), in *The Young Hegelians*, ed. Stepelevich, 170.

³¹ Feuerbach, *Principles* (*Grundsätze*, §61, 321). "The individual man, for himself, does not have in himself the human essence" (*ibid.*). Earlier, in *The Essence*, he stated that "only together can men constitute man" (*Wesen*, 273).

taking on a natural and affective – rather than social and “material” – character. For instance, according to him, in love, “man and woman complete one another, to represent, together, the complete human being.”³² All indications are, however, that Marx is not particularly concerned about the size of the Feuerbachian community. And if it is not quite true (at least, not entirely) that, for Feuerbach, the essence of man is an “abstraction inherent in each single individual,” then what is the target of the Marxian critique in the sixth thesis? It is that, for Feuerbach, altogether, existing men are already, in a way, “just as man can and should be,”³³ that essence and existence, properly understood, correspond. This is precisely the “essential harmony” that Feuerbach presupposes and that Marx finds unacceptable.³⁴

According to Feuerbach, the current aggregate of humans already constitutes “essence” and “Man.” For Marx, however, society does not yet exist as the seat of communitarian essence, but rather as the place of its negation – although it is also the place of its dialectical becoming. Such human essence exists there only in its dialectic *Werden* – and this is part of the disagreement expressed in the sixth thesis. Individuals still “separated” and “deformed” by the division of labour are nowhere near to constituting their “true” essence. If Feuerbach focused on “the ensemble of the social relations,” he would see that, even when taken collectively, “as a unity,” men still do not constitute *Gattungswesen* at all. Only through a practical and radical change in those objective material relations, which “negate” species-essence, can individuals find – and be “reconciled” with – their essence and effectively constitute the “species” and “community” of which Feuerbach so often speaks.

The fact is that, as represented by Feuerbach, in spite of everything, individuals, considered in and of themselves, *already have* an original essentiality and reality as “humans” that Marx is not inclined to grant them. According to Feuerbach, each individual per se does not constitute Man but is already, intrinsically and naturally, “a man.” Together

³² Feuerbachian true man becomes the family, as in the model he finds in the Brahmin tradition of the laws of Manu. He approvingly states that among the Hindus “a complete man” is made up of his “wife, himself and his son” (*Wesen*, 273). Even in the Old Testament, Adam – unlike the Christian Adam – “is incomplete without his wife” (*ibid.*).

³³ Feuerbach, *Wesen*, 273. “Men complete each other morally, physically and intellectually,” says Feuerbach, so that, “taken together, they are what man should and can be” (*ibid.*).

³⁴ If essence is not, “*in its reality*,” “*the ensemble of social relations*,” then “*ideal*” – communitarian – essence is already in “*existence*.” In that case, instead of radically revolutionizing those relations, one would merely advocate a changed consciousness and a humane education (which of course would challenge harsh relations to a certain extent).

with other individuals, he is the basis for constituting the human essence as something that is naturally “distributed” among them. It can be said that they already contain essence *inherently*, so much so that, no matter what their current relations may be, they are already essentially *human* individuals *before forming those relations*. This led Marx to consider Feuerbachian individuals as being essentially “abstract.” Engels would later find an excellent formula for stating this: Feuerbachian man “has intercourse with other man; however each one of them is just as much an abstraction as he himself.”³⁵

The heart of the matter lies in that Feuerbach would *presuppose* human individuals as first, self-subsistent realities, as a plurality of substances/subjects, one could say. This, among other things, is closer to the typical “ontology” of modern, liberal democracy. However, if Feuerbach can say that individuals “have” relations, according to Marx, relations “have” individuals, who are “posited” by them – in other words, by their circumstances and history. The world of relations is *anterior* and represents the true essence, in *dialectical becoming*, of the individuals who engage in them. Paradoxically, this is what Marx attempts to argue when he states that Feuerbach puts “Man” in the place of “*real historical men*” (*GI* 57, *DI* 42). Therefore, Marx is criticising not just Feuerbach’s idealism but also his – albeit indecisive – “empiricism” (sensationalism), which another (anti-)Hegelian, semi-Feuerbachian communist, Moses Hess, rejected just before Marx did.

The point is not, then, that Marx gave up the idea of an essence of man, when developing historic materialism, in 1845–6. On the contrary, I believe that essence (translated into historically, dialectically developing relations and conditions, “*ever taking on new forms*”) can still be considered the “parameter” for his critique of the present state of things. What Marx does is to further remove that essence from present realities, while including it (as a sort of immanent *telos*) in the objective and present becoming or *Werden* of history. In the world, where universal “Man” and communitarian essence should be sought, Marx sees their negation, although he also sees their emergence, their becoming. Feuerbach has a different perspective and so “does not enter upon a criticism of this real essence” (sixth thesis) – that is, he does not engage in the criticism

³⁵ Friedrich Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach und der Ausgang der klassischen deutschen Philosophie* [1886], *Marx & Engels Werke*, vol. 21 (Berlin: Dietz, 1962), 286. In English: *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1946).

of that reality as the negation of the human essence and the site of its constitution; in other words, he does not engage in the negation of that negation.³⁶

In his response to the anti-communist and anti-humanist critiques of Bauer and Stirner, Moses Hess, a comrade of Marx until at least 1845, pointed out the contradictory nature of Feuerbach's view in similar terms. Feuerbach, he said, sees the isolated individual of modern society as "*actual* [or real] *man*" and sees that "*bad reality* [actuality]" as reality/actuality. Furthermore, Feuerbach is said to believe that essence "is present in the individual" – which, according to Hess, is the "philosophical fraud" of our times and "sagacity" of modern politics.³⁷ Situating this essence at the level of relationships and individuals in the dimension of history, Marx solves the problem of the ontological individualism still remaining in Feuerbach. Engels concludes that, "from the abstract man of Feuerbach, one arrives at real living men only when one considers them as participants in history."³⁸ First and foremost, we cannot start with separate individuals as the primary reality and then reach their common "essence" as something more than an "*abstract*" idea, an "*internal*" generality (*Allgemeinheit*), uniting men only "*naturally*."

Feuerbach trusts that "love is the species sentiment of itself," and, apart from that, the truth of species is an object only to "thought" and "reason."³⁹ In his philosophy of I-thou, the generality and infinity of essence, as well as its "exteriority" and "objectivity," are given, paradoxically, by sentiment. However, just as Marx believed that essence could not exist

³⁶ What I am here referring to as negation of human essence is not an impediment that would prevent its realization. Dialectically, it is its becoming, certainly not a linear one, but a dialectical, revolutionary becoming. Revolutionary, practical criticism would not be necessary or revolutionary if existing reality were just "different" from what it "should be" (rather, from what it is determined to be), if it were not the home of an essential and universal contradiction. On the other hand, revolutionary criticism would be an empty and impotent ideal or *Sollen* if it did not coincide with the dialectical movement of that reality itself. For Bruno Bauer's view of this question of the "ought," see Douglas Moggach, "'Free Means Ethical': Bruno Bauer's Critical Idealism," *Owl of Minerva*, vol. 33, no. 1, Fall/Winter (2001–2), 1–24.

³⁷ Moses Hess, "The Recent Philosophers" [1845], in *The Young Hegelians*, ed. Stepelevich, 363. According to Hess, "Feuerbach's *Philosophy of the Future* is nothing other than a philosophy of the present, but a present which for the German still appears as a future, an Ideal." It expresses philosophically "what in England, France, North America and elsewhere is a present reality – the modern state confronted with its supplementary civil society" (*ibid*).

³⁸ Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach und der Ausgang*, 290.

³⁹ See Feuerbach, *Wesen*, 273.

in thought alone, so he could not find its truth in sentiment.⁴⁰ With his new conception, he gave the essence of man another reality and materiality and even offered it a true and full (future) realisation in society. According to Marx, Feuerbach merely wants to give human beings the consciousness that they “have always needed each other,” but for the “real communist it is a question of overthrowing the existing state of things” (*GI* 54, *DI* 41). This could be seen as the practical and material institution of Feuerbachian species-man and the true realisation of his communitarian essence.

Marx does not simply want to adapt man’s consciousness to the “fact” that men need one another but to “adapt” reality itself to that concept, constituting, as he himself says, “social humanity” (*vergesellschaftete Menschheit*) or “human society” (*menschliche Gesellschaft*). He will establish men’s need for one another much more strongly and demand that society organise itself on the basis of that concept, meaning according to the “social being” of man. Feuerbach’s viewpoint leaves essence and species to thought and sentiment, and also very “close” to the present state of affairs. He is mistaken when he calls himself a “communist” after describing himself as a “common man” (*Gemeinmensch*), as if “communist” were “a predicate of ‘man’,” as if the common man were actually and naturally species-man and communist. For Marx, being a communist is much more than an attribute belonging to man. It can be attained by present individuals only through engagement in the *Werden* of history, which is the becoming of their true social/communitarian – human – essence (*GI* 54, *DI* 41).

In conclusion, in order to apprehend our interpretive claim fully, and to avoid being puzzled by other statements on “human” and “essence” in the rest of the *German Ideology*, we should very briefly consider how these notions further unfold in Marx’s new perspective.⁴¹ Men’s essence is always “the ensemble of the social relations,” of their relationships and circumstances (which determine what they are), no matter how

⁴⁰ Arguing against the theology of sentiment, Hegel had already stated that “the sentiment of essence” cannot establish a being in all its “substantiality” and “solidity”; only philosophy, as a science, can do that: G. W. F. Hegel, “Preface to the *Phenomenology*” [1807], *Hegel, Texts and Commentary*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1966), 24–6. Or, according to Bruno Bauer, *The Trumpet of the Last Judgement against Hegel the Atheist and Antichrist. An Ultimatum*, trans. Lawrence Stepelevich (Lewiston, N.Y.: Mellen, 1989), 102: “The substantial should not and cannot remain in the heart.”

⁴¹ A fuller account of Marx’s treatment of “Man” in his materialist conception of history is offered in my book on the Marx–Stirner debate (see note 1).

“un-communitarian” or “inhuman” these may be (and then men will be “un-communitarian” and “inhuman”).⁴² On the other hand, in a more restricted sense, Man and (species) essence correspond to a “final” ideal (even if immanent in the movement of reality) when we envision a situation (and that will be “communism”) where men’s social relations – following the end of the division of labour – no longer stand before individuals (then necessarily completely socialised/communitarian) as a “hypostasis,” as something independent, limiting, and oppressive of them.⁴³

Nonetheless, for Marx’s new explanatory view to be entirely “historical” and “materialist,” there still is something more to be said. “Essence,” “the human,” “Man,” and the like, even in a positive, “ideal-normative” sense, may also apply to “ensembles of social relations” and “stages of development” before socialism and communism. That would be the case when those terms refer to “newer,” “broader,” “more satisfying” relations and situations, as envisioned – sometimes hazily and chimerically – from the standpoint of people living under “narrower,” “outdated,” “unsatisfying” relations, when these relations no longer correspond to the development reached by “productive forces.”⁴⁴ Inversely, in the same context, prevailing relations may also be referred to as precisely that which is “human” – from the standpoint of the dominant class. For, according to the dominant ideology, such relations are that which is the “norm” and “normal,” that which corresponds to “man’s nature” and so forth, while the rest is considered “inhuman,” “criminal,” “rebellious.”⁴⁵

Finally, the fact that Marx puts “essence,” “Man,” and “human” in quotation marks means that he associates these notions with the still

⁴² “The conditions, independent of them, in which [men] produced their life . . . had to take the form – insofar as they were expressed in thoughts – of ideal conditions and necessary relationships . . . arising from the concept of man as such, from the human essence, from the nature of man” (*GI* 198–9, *DI* 167). See also *GI* 89.

⁴³ “The individuals who are no longer subject to the division of labour have been conceived by philosophers as an ideal, under the name of ‘Man,’” says Marx (*GI* 86). Such complete emancipation “is not possible without the community . . . The illusory community, in which individuals have up to now combined, always took an independent existence in relation to them” (*GI* 93). No wonder that means for Marx the beginning of something else entirely different. See also *GI* 52, 53, 56, 64, 87, 93.

⁴⁴ See *GI* 62–4, *passim*, and 94.

⁴⁵ “The positive expression ‘human’ corresponds to the definite conditions predominant at a certain stage of production and to the way of satisfying needs determined by them, just as the negative expression ‘inhuman’ corresponds to the attempt, within the existing mode of production, to negate these predominant conditions and the way of satisfying needs prevailing under them” (*GI* 487–8, *DI* 417–18).

“philosophical,” “idealistic,” “ideological,” and particularly “German” ways of translating/sublimating reality. However, the point here – never to be overlooked – is that, for Marx, differently from what radical “idealists” or “ideologues” like Bauer and Stirner think (and for that matter also standard, modern empiricists), such universal notions do have a real, objective, material content and are, from Marx’s new theoretical perspective, “empirically translatable.”⁴⁶ That is why he can drop these compromising words at will and just refer confidently to their supposedly “empirical” content. And that is also why, when he corrects Feuerbach by saying that human essence is “*the ensemble of social relations*,” there is no reason we should not take him at his word.

⁴⁶ Bruno Bauer (and, for that matter, also Stirner), says Marx, “has not the slightest conception of the connection of the ideas of Hegel’s ‘absolute spirit’ and Feuerbach’s ‘genus’ (*Gattung*, species) with the existing world” (*GI* 105), or of “the real basis of what philosophers have conceived as . . . ‘essence of Man’” (*GI* 51; see also 50 and 44).

Freedom and the 'Realm of Necessity'

Sean Sayers

The realm of freedom actually begins only where labour which is determined by necessity and mundane considerations ceases; thus in the very nature of things it lies beyond the sphere of actual material production. Just as the savage must wrestle with Nature to satisfy his wants, to maintain and reproduce life, so must civilized man, and he must do so in all social formations and under all possible modes of production. With his development this realm of physical necessity expands as a result of his wants; but, at the same time, the forces of production which satisfy these wants also increase. Freedom in this field can only consist in socialized man, the associated producers, rationally regulating their interchange with Nature, bringing it under their common control, instead of being ruled by it as by the blind forces of Nature; and achieving this with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most favourable to, and worthy of, their human nature. But it nonetheless still remains a realm of necessity. Beyond it begins that development of human energy which is an end in itself, the true realm of freedom, which, however, can blossom forth only with the realm of necessity as its basis. The shortening of the working day is its basic prerequisite.¹

I

It is often argued that there are two conflicting strands in Marx's thought on work and freedom. In his early writings Marx maintains that, although work in contemporary society is an alienated activity, it need not be so. Alienation can and will be overcome in a future society. Potentially, work can be a fulfilling and liberating activity.²

¹ Karl Marx, *Capital*, III (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971), 820.

² Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844," in *Early Writings* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), 279–400; "Excerpts from James Mill's Elements of Political Economy," in *Early Writings*, 259–78.

In his later work, however, Marx appears to change his outlook. This is evident, it is argued, in the well-known passage from *Capital* quoted above. Here Marx seems to adopt a more 'sombre' and 'realistic',³ a 'gloomy' and 'pessimistic'⁴ perspective on the place of work in human life. He appears to say that economically necessary labour is inescapably alienating and unfree. Cohen, for example, glosses this passage as follows: "Being a means of life, [labour] cannot be wanted, and will be replaced by desired activity as the working day contracts."⁵ 'True freedom' is attainable only outside work. The aim of a future society, therefore, is not to humanise work but rather to reduce it to the unavoidable minimum and to expand the 'realm of freedom'.⁶

My aim in this paper is to question this account of what Marx is saying in this passage and to clarify his views on work and freedom. It is a mistake, I shall argue, to interpret Marx as opposing the realms of necessity and freedom. Moreover, properly understood, this passage provides no grounds for thinking that Marx's views on work and freedom changed significantly in his later writings.

II

By the 'realm of necessity', Marx means the sphere of economically necessary labour, labour to meet material needs.⁷ He contrasts it with the 'realm of freedom', the sphere of activities not so determined. This encompasses time for "idleness or for the performance of activities which are

³ R. N. Berki, "On the Nature and Origins of Marx's Concept of Labour," *Political Theory*, 7:1 (1979), 53.

⁴ G. A. Cohen, "The Dialectic of Labour in Marx," in *History, Labour, and Freedom* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 207.

⁵ Cohen, "The Dialectic of Labour," 207.

⁶ See, for example, Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 105–15; Berki, "On the Nature and Origins of Marx's Concept of Labour," 53–4; Cohen, "The Dialectic of Labour," 207–8; Herbert Marcuse, "The Realm of Necessity and the Realm of Freedom," *Praxis*, 5 (1969), 20–5; John McMurtry *The Structure of Marx's World-View* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978), 51–2; John Plamenatz, *Karl Marx's Philosophy of Man* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1975), 143ff. See also J. C. Klagge, "Marx's Realms of 'Freedom' and 'Necessity,'" *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 16:4 (1986), 769–78, for an account nearer to that presented here.

⁷ Marx makes related distinctions between 'necessary' and 'surplus' labour and labour time. These apply only in capitalist society. Karl Marx, "Economic Manuscripts of 1861–3," in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 30 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1988), 190–3; Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, trans. M. Nicolaus (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), 708–9.

not directly productive (as e.g. war, affairs of state) or for the development of human abilities and social potentialities (art, etc., science) which have no directly practical purpose."⁸ However, it is a mistake – though a common one – to infer that the realm of necessity must therefore be a realm of unfreedom. This inference is predicated on the assumption that economic labour is necessarily unfree. There is no evidence that Marx makes this assumption, either here or elsewhere. Quite the contrary. In this very passage, Marx explicitly talks of freedom *in the realm of necessity* ('freedom in this field . . .') and spells out the conditions for it. Elsewhere he asserts that labour can be "self-realisation, objectification of the subject . . . real freedom."⁹

The idea that economically necessary work can be free and fulfilling is fundamental to Marx's outlook, both here and throughout his work.¹⁰ However, it is unfamiliar to many contemporary philosophers. Indeed, it is denied, implicitly at least, by most traditional philosophies. Plato and Aristotle regard a fully human life as the life of reason, requiring exemption from labour, which they look upon as a lower activity catering only to lower needs. For Kant, too, we are rational beings, and our material nature is a lower and merely animal aspect of our being. Such attitudes are also evident in an important strand of Christian thought which treats work as a 'curse', a punishment for our 'fallen' nature. Work is seen as painful toil by the hedonism that underlies utilitarianism and classical economics.¹¹ On this view we are essentially consumers rather than producers, who work only as a means to satisfy our needs.¹²

Views such as these are pervasive in philosophy and in everyday life, and Marx is often interpreted in the light of them. According to Marx, however, work has a quite different place in human life. We are essentially active and creative beings who can develop and fulfil ourselves only through productive activity. In his early writings Marx describes work as the 'vital activity' of human beings, their 'species activity', the 'essential activity' by which human beings are distinguished from other

⁸ Karl Marx, "Economic Manuscripts of 1861–3," 190.

⁹ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 611.

¹⁰ Sean Sayers, *Marxism and Human Nature* (London: Routledge, 1998), ch. 4.

¹¹ Cf. Marx's criticisms of Adam Smith's views on work as a 'sacrifice' of freedom and happiness, and a 'curse' (Marx, *Grundrisse*, 611).

¹² P. D. Anthony, *The Ideology of Work* (London: Tavistock, 1978); Sayers, *Marxism and Human Nature*, chapters 2–3.

animals.¹³ He maintains these views throughout his life. In the *Grundrisse* he describes labour as potentially a 'free' activity; in the 'Critique of the Gotha Programme' he envisages that it may become 'life's prime want'.¹⁴ However, he does not spell out the philosophical basis for these views.

This position derives from Hegel. For Hegel, as for Marx, work plays an essential role in human life. It is the basis on which human beings are distinct from other animals. Nonhuman animals, on Hegel's view, have a purely immediate relation to nature, both to their own nature and to the surrounding natural environment. They are driven by their own immediate instincts and desires, and they consume the objects they desire immediately and directly. Humans, by contrast, are self-conscious beings; they have 'being-for-self'. They can stand back from their immediate instincts and from what is immediately present to them, both through conscious reflection and in a practical way. Work is a form of such practical being-for-self. In work, gratification is deferred; the object is not consumed immediately. It is not simply annihilated; rather, it is formed and altered for later consumption or use. Thus a mediated and distinctively human relation to nature is established.

Through work we separate ourselves from nature and establish a self apart. At the same time we begin the process of overcoming this division from nature. By objectifying ourselves in our products, we come to recognise our powers and capacities as real and objective, and thus we develop a consciousness of self. Moreover, by humanising the world we come to feel increasingly at home in it. As Hegel says, through work, man 'humanizes his environment, by showing how it is capable of satisfying him and how it cannot preserve any power of independence against him. Only by means of this effectual activity is he . . . aware of himself and at home in his environment'.¹⁵ For Marx, too, it is through the productive activity of work that we overcome our alienation from nature and develop and recognise our distinctive powers.

It is . . . in his fashioning of the objective [world] that man really proves himself to be a *species-being*. Such production is his active species-life. Through it nature appear as *his* work and his reality. The object of labour is the *objectification of*

¹³ Marx, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844," 328–9; K. Marx and F. Engels, *The German Ideology Part I* (New York: International Publishers, 1970), 42.

¹⁴ K. Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Programme," in *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, 2 vols., II (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1958), 24.

¹⁵ G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1975), 256.

the species-life of man: for man reproduces himself not only intellectually, in his consciousness, but actively and actually, and he can therefore contemplate himself in a world he himself has created.¹⁶

Both for Hegel and for Marx, in this way, work is not only a means to satisfy material needs; it is also an activity of self-development and self-realisation. This process of objectification and self-realisation is present not only in work but in other forms of practical activity as well. Its fullest development is in artistic creation. This is the highest form of productive activity for both of these philosophers.

In the present context it is particularly important to see that a distinctive account of freedom is associated with these views. According to this, freedom is not an all-or-nothing affair; it is present by degrees. Different kinds of practical activity involve different degrees of freedom for the agent and, correlatively, allow different degrees of freedom to the object. Purely natural, animal consumption under the impulsion of immediate desire is not free. It is directly determined by the appetites that drive it. Direct consumption of this sort is also determined by its object. The creature driven by hunger is governed by the food in its environment. Moreover, in such consumption no freedom is granted to the object: It is simply devoured and destroyed.

By working on the object and deferring gratification, human beings detach themselves from their appetites and desires and acquire a degree of freedom with respect to them. At the same time, work allows a measure of freedom to the object. The object is not immediately consumed; it is transformed and hence preserved for later consumption or use. Nevertheless, the object is destined ultimately for consumption and destruction, for the purpose of economic work is the satisfaction of needs. Such work is thus still in the 'realm of necessity'.

Artistic creation, by contrast, is truly free activity. It is not in the service of material needs and its product is not for consumption: Determination by natural desire is entirely transcended. Such activity is not a means to the end of satisfying material needs; it has no economic function. Its aims are aesthetic, not economic; it is an end in itself. This is what Marx is referring to when he talks of activity in the 'realm of freedom'. These ideas are held by Marx throughout his life. What he says here in *Capital* in his maturity is entirely consonant with what he says in his youth, in the *1844 Manuscripts*: 'animals . . . produce only when immediate physical need compels them

¹⁶ Marx, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844," 329.

to do so, while man produces even when he is free from physical need and truly produces only in freedom from such need . . . man also produces in accordance with the laws of beauty'.¹⁷

In short, freedom is a matter of degree according to this conception. It ranges all the way from the unfreedom of instinctive and purely natural ('animal') activity, through different kinds of labour more or less immediately determined by need, up to the truly free activity of artistic creation.

III

Thus, contrary to the views of the commentators cited above, there can be freedom in the sphere of necessary work. Marx is explicit on this score. He specifies two conditions for such freedom in the passage from *Capital* that I am discussing.¹⁸ First, alienation from the process of production must be overcome. 'The associated producers' must 'rationally [regulate] their interchange with Nature, bringing it under their common control, instead of being ruled by it as by the blind forces of Nature'. Note here that freedom involves not simply an absence of constraint but also the positive aspect of rational self-determination.

Second, necessary economic labour must be carried out 'with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most favourable to, and worthy of, their human nature'. What Marx means is that through the use of human intelligence, especially with the introduction of machinery, the brute physical exertion involved in work can be minimised and the intelligent and 'scientific' aspects of work enhanced.¹⁹

Marx also insists that the time devoted to necessary labour must be reduced so that 'disposable time' for free activity, the 'realm of freedom', can be increased. Is there not a contradiction here? If activity in the realm of necessity can be free, as I have been arguing is Marx's view, why should it be reduced? Does this passage from *Capital* not imply after all that, for Marx, work in the realm of necessity is a regrettable necessity, as writers like Berki and Cohen assert?

Marx does not explicitly answer these questions. What he does say, however, suggests a response along the following lines: To maintain that economic work can be a liberating and fulfilling activity is not to say that

¹⁷ Marx, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844," 329.

¹⁸ There is a similar account of the conditions for free labour in Marx, *Grundrisse*, 611.

¹⁹ Cf. Marx, *Grundrisse*, 611.

it is the only such activity or that it should be our sole activity. Yet in industrial society, particularly when Marx was writing in the middle of the nineteenth century, working hours had been extended to extreme lengths, as Marx describes in the celebrated chapter of *Capital* on 'The Working Day'.²⁰ Since then they have gradually decreased, but they still dominate the lives of most working people, leaving little time for anything else.²¹ Marx wants work time to be reduced to what he calls 'a normal length'²² not because he thinks that in ideal conditions necessary work should be eliminated altogether, but so that people can have time and energy for other kinds of activities as well, and fulfil themselves in a variety of ways. In these conditions, and with the removal of class subordination, economic labour can become a free activity.

It is self-evident that if labour-time is reduced to a normal length and, furthermore, labour is no longer performed for someone else, but for myself, and, at the same time, the social contradictions between master and men, etc., being abolished, it acquires a quite different, a free character.²³

Historically, up to now, the surplus labour of the majority has been the basis on which a small elite has been exempt from labour and able to enjoy free time.

The free time of the non-working parts of society is based on the surplus labour or overwork, the surplus labour time, of the working part. The free development of the former is based on the fact that the workers have to employ the whole of their time, hence the room for their own development, purely in the production of particular use values; the development of the human capacities on one side is based on the restriction of development on the other side. The whole of civilization and social development so far has been founded on this antagonism.²⁴

Work time and free time have stood in antagonistic opposition to each other. To be free has meant not working, and to work has meant to be unfree. Neither condition has been satisfactory. Alienated and oppressive work has existed alongside an alienated and disconnected sort of freedom. Philosophical theories for the most part have reflected this situation. Activities that provide for material needs have been looked down

²⁰ Karl Marx, *Capital*, I, trans. S. Moore and E. Aveling (New York: International Publishers, 1967), ch. 10.

²¹ J. S. Zeisel, "The Workweek in American Industry 1850–1956," in *Mass Leisure* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1958), 145–53.

²² Karl Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, III, trans. J. Cohen (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1972), 257.

²³ Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, III, 257.

²⁴ Marx, "Economic Manuscripts of 1861–3," 191; cf. Marx, *Grundrisse*, 705–6, 708).

upon and disparaged as 'lower' forms of activity, in contrast to intellectual and rational pursuits, which are regarded as 'higher' and more worthy. Plato is the extreme here. At times he suggests that our bodily and natural appetites are a burden and that we would be better off without them. Other philosophers, such as Aristotle, Kant, and even Hegel, sometimes appear to accept this line of thought as well. At other times, however, all these writers (including Plato) recognise that we are physical as well as rational beings and that our bodily needs are essential to us.²⁵ Our happiness lies not in opposing the rational to the bodily aspects of our being but in finding a way of overcoming this antagonism and harmonising these aspects.

Marx, I am suggesting, follows this latter line of thought. In a society of the future, Marx envisages that the antagonism that has hitherto prevailed between these aspects can be transcended.²⁶ The purpose of limiting the working day is not to minimise or eliminate work in the 'realm of necessity' as such but rather to overcome the antagonistic relation that has existed historically between work and freedom. The aim is to create the conditions in which alienation can be overcome – conditions in which necessary work can become a free activity, and in which free creative activity can itself become a universal human need.²⁷ This is Marx's idea, not only in his early writings but also in *Capital* and throughout.

IV

A number of questions are raised by the account I have been developing. Will the aim of society continue to be to minimise necessary labour in order to maximise free time? Will the distinction between the realms of necessity and freedom persist even when the antagonism between them is overcome?

It is not easy to interpret what Marx says on these issues; there are different and possibly divergent strands to his thought. On the one hand, in the passage from *Capital* that I am discussing, Marx insists that the realm of necessity will continue to exist 'in all social formations and under all possible modes of production'. This follows simply from the fact

²⁵ Sean Sayers, *Plato's Republic* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 142–4.

²⁶ This antagonism is ultimately related to the division between mental and manual labour: Sayers, *Marxism and Human Nature*, ch. 2.

²⁷ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 708.

that we are creatures of physical need, a fact that no social changes can alter.

So far... as labour is a creator of use-value, is useful labour, it is a necessary condition, independent of all forms of society, for the existence of the human race; it is an eternal nature-imposed necessity, without which there can be no material exchanges between man and Nature, and therefore no life.²⁸

Marx also maintains that the aim of society will continue to be to minimise the time devoted to satisfying material needs (necessary labour time). In the *Grundrisse* Marx spells this out as follows. In a future society,

The *surplus labour of the mass* has ceased to be the condition for the development of general wealth, just as the *non-labour of the few*, for the development of the general powers of the human head. With that, production based on exchange value breaks down, and the direct, material production process is stripped of the form of penury and antithesis. The free development of individualities, and hence not the reduction of necessary labour time so as to posit surplus labour, but rather the general reduction of the necessary labour of society to a minimum, which then corresponds to the artistic, scientific etc. development of the individuals in the time set free, and with the means created, for all of them.²⁹

All this seems to imply that the distinction between the realms of necessity and freedom must continue to exist in any future society.

However, other themes in Marx's thought point in a different direction, towards the reduction and ultimate overcoming of the very distinction between these realms. Fundamental to Marx's outlook is the view that human needs develop and change historically. As Marx puts it in the passage from *Capital* under discussion, the realm of necessity 'expands'; needs become more developed and differentiated. This is a theme that Hegel also emphasises. He gives an illuminating example of the process.

Hercules was attired in a lion skin, and this is a simple way of satisfying [the need for clothing]. Reflection fragments this simple need and divides it into many parts: according to its particular nature, each individual part of the body – head, neck, feet – is given particular clothing, and one concrete need is divided into many needs and these in turn into many others.³⁰

Moreover, clothing also comes to have a social and even an aesthetic function. The work to meet our need for clothing, which is in the realm of

²⁸ Marx, *Capital*, I, 42–3.

²⁹ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 705–6.

³⁰ G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on Natural Right and Political Science. The First Philosophy of Right, Heidelberg 1817–1818, with Additions from the Lectures of 1818–1819*, trans. J. Michael Stewart and Peter C. Hodgson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 167–68.

necessity, thus acquires an aesthetic aspect, a creative and free dimension. A similar process occurs with food, housing, and other basic necessities, all of which come to have an aesthetic dimension.

Conversely, as needs develop, free creative activity itself becomes a need. The expansion of needs increasingly takes in the requirement for self-expression and self-realization.³¹ Marx foresees the emergence of the person “rich in needs” who is “simultaneously the man *in need* of a totality of vital human expression . . . the man in whom his own realization exists as inner necessity, as need.”³²

With human development, that is to say, basic necessities are aesthetised and free expression becomes a necessity. Work to satisfy basic needs becomes free activity, and free activity becomes a need. In this way, Marx seems to envisage that not only the antagonism but ultimately even the distinction between the realms of necessity and freedom will eventually be overcome.

Thus, on the one hand, Marx says that the distinction between the realms of necessity and freedom must persist even in a classless society. On the other hand, he implies that the distinction between these realms can eventually be overcome. He does not resolve this contradiction. However, even if his view is that the distinction persists, this goes no way towards vindicating the accounts of writers like Berki and Cohen. For as I have argued, in distinguishing a realm of ‘freedom’ from a realm of ‘necessity’, Marx is not making a distinction between a realm of freedom and a sphere of unfreedom. Nor is he implying that necessary work can never be free. On the contrary, a proper understanding of Marx’s accounts of labour and freedom shows clearly that he believes that necessary labour can indeed be a free and self-realising activity. This is what I have been arguing.

V

Hannah Arendt is one the writers who criticise Marx for holding contradictory views on work and freedom. The passage from *Capital* that I have

³¹ The growth of such needs is apparent in the field of education, which now standardly involves a significant component of art, music, dance, creative writing, and so on, at least at lower levels, in a way that even a century ago it did not; and also in the growth of leisure activities (Sayers, *Marxism and Human Nature*, ch. 4).

³² Marx, “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844,” 356. Agnes Heller attempts to theorise these developments with her concept of ‘radical needs.’ Agnes Heller, *The Theory of Need in Marx* (London: Alison and Busby, 1976).

been discussing is, she maintains, only one example of "a fundamental contradiction which runs like a red thread through the whole of Marx's thought," for "Marx's attitude toward labour, and that is toward the very centre of his thought, has never ceased to be equivocal."³³ Because her criticisms are based on what she herself acknowledges to be idiosyncratic concepts of 'labour' and 'work',³⁴ I shall deal with them here separately.

According to Arendt, there is a fundamental distinction between 'labour' and 'work' that Marx fails to make. Labour, she maintains, is what we do to satisfy our basic physical needs. It is a natural activity to satisfy bodily needs; it is an animal-like activity in the sphere of necessity, a form of activity that we share with other animals and that is necessary for the maintenance of life. Such labour is carried out by what Arendt terms '*animal laborans*'. It involves the repetitive and cyclical process of maintaining natural life by continually satisfying needs that constantly re-arise. It is thus 'primarily concerned with the means of its own reproduction'.³⁵ Either it creates no product at all, or its products are consumed almost as soon as they are created. Work, by contrast, creates durable objects, enduring products for 'use' and not merely for consumption. Work thereby creates a 'world'. It is the distinctively human activity of what she calls '*homo faber*'.

According to Arendt, Marx fails to make this distinction. He talks of 'labour' in terms that are applicable only to 'work'. He looks upon 'all labor as work and [speaks] of the *animal laborans* in terms much more fitting for *homo faber*'.³⁶ He maintains that the labour of '*animal laborans*' can lead to fulfilment and freedom, whereas Arendt maintains that they can be attained only through the work of '*homo faber*'.

The *animal laborans* [can] be redeemed from its predicament of imprisonment in the ever-recurring cycle of the life process, of being forever subject to the necessity of labor and consumption, only through the mobilization of another human capacity, the capacity for making, fabricating, and producing of *homo faber*, who . . . not only eases the pain and trouble of laboring but also erects a world of durability.³⁷

These arguments are unsatisfactory in several ways. The way in which Arendt conceives of 'labour' muddles the distinction between animal and

³³ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 104.

³⁴ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 79–80.

³⁵ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 88.

³⁶ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 87, cf 102.

³⁷ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 236.

human activity. She describes human 'labour' as a sort of animal activity and looks upon it as something almost subhuman. Likewise, as the term '*animal laborans*' itself suggests, she tends to treat those who perform it as in effect a subhuman species. In a corresponding way, she elevates 'work' (and what she calls 'action') above the material realm. She thus makes 'work' transcendent and gives it an exaggerated significance.

More generally, Arendt's attempt to detach 'labour' from 'work' is confused and untenable; the two are necessarily and inextricably combined in human productive activity. The 'labour' that meets consumption needs also creates a product; it is thus at the same time a form of 'work' in Arendt's sense.

As Hegel and Marx maintain, and as we saw above, labour is a distinctively human activity that creates a distinct product. It is this product that we then consume. As Hegel observes, "man, as consumer, is chiefly concerned with human products. . . . There are few immediate materials which do not need to be processed . . . perhaps water is unique in that it can be drunk as it is found."³⁸ Animals, by contrast, consume what is around them directly without transforming it into a product through work.

In short, human labour does not simply vanish in consumption; it creates a product. Indeed, according to Marx, consumption itself is a form of production. "In taking in food, for example, which is a form of consumption, the human being produces his own body."³⁹ Moreover, human labour takes place in a context of social relations, and it produces and reproduces those relations, and with them the social world. According to Marx, "M. Proudhon the economist understands very well that men make cloth, linen or silk materials in definite relations of production. But what he has not understood is that these definite social relations are just as much produced by men as linen, flax, etc."⁴⁰ Arendt does not appear to have understood this either.

Arendt's account of labour, it is often claimed, applies particularly to domestic labour, to the tasks of cooking, cleaning, mending, and so on,

³⁸ G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 232. This is no longer so. The water we drink is now invariably the product of elaborate processing. We even get 'natural spring water' from plastic bottles.

³⁹ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 90. "The product . . . of individual consumption is the consumer himself" (Marx, *Capital*, I, 183).

⁴⁰ Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1978), 103.

usually performed by women in various social formations. Such labour indeed seems to be endlessly repetitive and cyclical; it appears to vanish as soon as it is done and to create nothing enduring, just as Arendt describes. This is not the case, however. Such labour not only sustains life; it also produces and reproduces a home, a family, a social world.

Conversely, 'work' in Arendt's sense, the creation of enduring objects of use and a human world, cannot be separated from the activity of production to meet consumer needs. The human and social world always and necessarily arises out of and exists on the basis of productive activity to meet material needs. This is Marx's materialist theory, at any rate, and Arendt gives no good reasons to question it.

Seyla Benhabib argues that Arendt's distinction should be understood as an attempt to construct 'ideal types'.⁴¹ Arendt's categories should be treated as mere 'conceptual' abstractions that are useful for theoretical understanding even if they do not exist as distinct forms in reality. Elsewhere, I have argued at length that Marx questions the validity of abstractions of this sort. Integral to his approach is the attempt to comprehend social reality in concrete terms as a totality,⁴² but to pursue that line of argument here would take me too far from the theme of freedom.

However, there are other problems with the abstractions created by Arendt's account. As we have seen, Arendt reduces 'labour' and those who do it to an almost subhuman level. In a corresponding way, she elevates 'work' (and what she terms 'action') above the material realm. She thus gives it an exaggerated and false human significance. Such views were prevalent among the ruling class in the ancient world who relied on slave labour to provide them with the necessities of life, as Arendt well describes.⁴³ They looked down upon the slave who did such labour, the *animal laborans*, with disdain and contempt. Although Arendt explicitly dissociates herself from such views, she criticises modern society in terms that echo them. She describes modern society as a mass 'consumer' society in which the needs and interests of the modern '*animal laborans*' have become dominant. She treats with disdain and contempt the labour that meets consumer needs and those who do it. Such elitist attitudes may

⁴¹ Seyla Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1996), 131.

⁴² Sean Sayers, "Marxism and the Dialectical Method. A Critique of G. A. Cohen," in *Socialism, Feminism and Philosophy. A Radical Philosophy Reader*, ed. S. Sayers and P. Osborne (London: Routledge, 1990), 140–68.

⁴³ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 80–5.

have been tenable in the ancient world, where they corresponded to the prevailing social conditions. They are inappropriate and unacceptable in the modern world, where such conditions have long passed. It is one of the great achievements of the Hegelian and Marxist theories that I have described that they have criticised and replaced views such as these with an account of the place of labour in human life more fitting for modern conditions.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ I am grateful to the participants on the Left Hegelian panel at the Eighth Conference, International Society for the Study of European Ideas, Aberystwyth, July 2002, and particularly to Daniel Brudney and Andrew Chitty, for their comments and criticisms on an earlier draft. Portions of the final section are taken from Sean Sayers, "Creative Activity and Alienation in Hegel and Marx," *Historical Materialism*, 11:1 (2003), 107–28, with the permission of Brill Academic Publishers.

Work, Language, and Community

A Response to Hegel's Critics

Ardis B. Collins

Steven Smith's book *Hegel's Critique of Liberalism* begins with a description of contemporary liberalism that bears a striking resemblance to Herbert Marcuse's description of Hegel's state. According to Smith, the new liberal paradigm accepts individual autonomy as a natural datum and expects society to provide a framework of rules protecting the individual's right to pursue an individually chosen life-plan. Social institutions remain neutral to all substantive notions of the human good while providing equal protection of the law to everyone's interests.¹ Herbert Marcuse's interpretation of Hegel reads like a pessimistic version of the same liberal paradigm. According to Marcuse, Hegel acknowledges individual freedom as a value that society must respect, protect, and support. Yet Hegel also recognises the inevitable destructiveness of competing individual interests. Hegel's answer, as Marcuse understands it, is a strong sovereign state imposing restraints on the free play of individuality while upholding and protecting the rights of individual freedom. Marcuse criticises this approach because the unity imposed by the state remains detached from the real life of the people. The restraint that keeps them from damaging the interests of others operates as an external force, not as something intrinsic to their own life.²

This encounter between Marcuse and the liberal paradigm raises two questions: Why must the principle that unifies society become intrinsic

¹ Steven B. Smith, *Hegel's Critique of Liberalism. Rights in Context* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 2.

² Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution. Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960), Part I, Chapter VI, 169–223.

to the life of its individual citizens; and how can this be accomplished. The project proposed here will develop a Hegelian position on these questions, focusing especially on issues raised by the liberal paradigm and its critics, the Marxist alternative and its critics, and by left Hegelian approaches represented in this volume.

I

Eduard Gans, interpreted in this volume by Norbert Waszek, moves beyond Hegel commentary to develop his own Hegel-inspired position on constitutional monarchy and the problem of poverty.³ In the process, he exposes some of the problems that arise if society allows the free pursuit of self-interest in the workplace and gets its unity from a governing authority that remains detached from the real life of the people. Gans criticises the Prussian monarchy for refusing to implement procedures that would give it a “constitutional” form. According to Gans, a constitutional state requires the participation of the people in the formation of its laws. The people cannot recognise in the monarch their own national life if they have nothing to say about the laws according to which he governs. Moreover, the plight of the poor in an economic system driven by self-interest creates rifts that no governing authority by itself can overcome. How can the poor experience the nation and its governing authority as their own social world if in the realities of the workplace they experience a world that excludes them?

Gans, like Hegel, recognises that the free play of modern subjectivity and self-interest creates the contingency that makes poverty possible. An economic system driven by this self-absorbed subjectivity becomes a world of “external circumstances” – a place of arbitrary choices, random opportunities, chance encounters, unpredictable events, and self-interested manipulation; and hence its processes do not necessarily satisfy the needs or embody the rights of those who must live and work in it. Both Gans and Hegel also recognise that the problem of poverty violates the principles of a free society and cannot be solved by simply giving the poor what they need. Poverty and the handout solution deprive the individual of the dignity that comes from appropriating the world through one’s own work and knowing this work as a contribution to the resources of society. Giving everyone work, however, leads to overproduction. In his

³ Norbert Waszek, “Eduard Gans on Poverty and on the Constitutional Debate,” in this volume.

later writings, Gans became dissatisfied with Hegel's suggestion that new markets might solve the problem of overproduction. Instead, he sought an answer to the poverty question by suggesting ways in which workplace associations, with the power to negotiate wages, might function on behalf of the poor and thus provide them with a place of belonging that acts for their interests within the dynamics of the economic system itself.

Waszek distinguishes these associations from Hegel's corporations. Hegel's corporations give individuals access to the workplace through education, which provides a skill that answers a social need. Gans' work associations give the poor bargaining power similar to that of modern labour unions. This kind of association, however, does not really address the problem exposed by Marcuse's challenge. With the power to negotiate wages, the poor might have an impact on the way the economic system operates. This would not, however, overcome the divisiveness of competing interests, because it would only add another competing interest to the mix.

Bruno Bauer, interpreted in this volume by Douglas Moggach, seems to understand this problem.⁴ Moggach clarifies Bauer's position by distinguishing among three definitions of liberty. The liberal definition identifies freedom as empirical non-interference; a person is free if no one actually interferes with the individual's right to govern his or her own affairs. One form of republicanism expands this notion of negative freedom by defining freedom as ideal non-domination. Being free requires the positive organisation of human relations so that the free action of each does not affect others as an external force. A more rigorous form of republicanism demands a self who has been transformed by the renunciation of all special interests and universalised by pure intentions. Individuals remain free in their relations to others only if each one wills nothing but the universality to which they all belong. Moggach interprets Bruno Bauer as a rigorous republican. According to this form of republicanism, freedom requires a modern subjectivity transformed into a universal subjectivity that does away with all particularity; and it calls for a movement that frees the world from all particularity – privilege, ethnicity, class – and creates a republic dedicated to universal interests alone.

Max Stirner, as David Leopold interprets him in this volume, challenges the way the problem itself is defined.⁵ According to Leopold's

⁴ Douglas Moggach, "Republican Rigorism and Emancipation in Bruno Bauer," in this volume.

⁵ David Leopold, "The State and I". Max Stirner's Anarchism," in this volume.

interpretation, Stirner rejects every concern that absorbs the individual into a dynamic governed by something other than this individual's own autonomous ego. This includes self-interest driven by natural or psychological forces; the state's imposing restrictions and rules, whether these operate as a protection of individual rights (the liberal interpretation) or as an external force controlling the destructiveness of self-interest (the Marcuse interpretation); the individual's surrender to an idea or cause that takes away individuality and particularity for the sake of some universal principle (Bauer); and all concern for establishing a social bond, whether this operates as an external rule or as an internal disposition.⁶ According to Stirner, all of these factors and concerns compromise the autonomy of the individual by putting him or her in service to something other than the individual's own self. Autonomy requires a stateless society in which individuals live their own life and feel free to use the lives of others for their own individual purposes.

This encounter between the liberal paradigm and Marcuse's interpretation of Hegel, Eduard Gans, Bruno Bauer, and Max Stirner identifies several issues associated with the tension between individual autonomy, particularity, and social unity. How is individual autonomy to be interpreted: as the pursuit of individually determined life-plans (liberalism), the pursuit of self-interest (Marcuse's Hegel), a universality constituting the individual's true self (Bauer), or an individual ego answerable to nothing but itself (Stirner)? Does freedom in social life call for the suppression of particular character and interests, as Bauer claims, or does it require liberation of the individual from all concerns and forces that integrate the individual into something other than the individual's own ego, as Stirner claims? Does freedom require a state, and if so does the state exist to protect individual freedom and rights (liberalism), or to form a social bond (implicit in Marcuse's critique of Hegel), or both (implicit in Gans' interpretation of Hegel)? How can a social bond be formed without violating the freedom of the individual? If particularity and unity belong to different parts of the nation's life, where is freedom located? If freedom belongs only to one part, how can it not be compromised by its association with the other? If freedom belongs to both parts, how are they reconciled? Are the people free if their freedom in the workplace is overruled by a strong governing authority in no way accountable to

⁶ Lawrence S. Stepelevich in "Ein Menschenleben: Hegel and Stirner" (in this volume) touches on this same issue when he describes the way Stirner distinguishes between childhood and adolescence. Childhood is driven by inclination; adolescence serves an idea.

them? Are the poor and the marginalised free just because they have the same king as everybody else, if they have no entitlement claim on the economic resources of the world in which they live?

II

The Marxism debate refines the issues introduced in the liberalism debate. Both Hannah Arendt and Jürgen Habermas criticise Marx because he tries to ground the unity of social life in the dynamics of work. Both claim that the instrumentality of work loses what is essential to communal living. Language, not work, creates community. Arendt and Habermas disagree, however, about what kind of communality this is.

According to Habermas, Marxism conceives human life as a process in which an acting subject manipulates objects to form a world that answers to the agent's desires and needs. In the process, the agent creates the person that he or she is. Habermas criticises this position because it reduces the subject to a self who has been formed by material needs and the work that creates a world to satisfy them.⁷ Habermas offers an account of communicative reason to expose the possibilities that the instrumentality of work does not capture. Communication expresses the speaker's interest in coming to an understanding with others about something in their shared world. This process calls into play all three parts of speech: third-person speech for representing or stating the way things are in the world; second-person speech for speaking *to* others, engaging in dialogue with them; and first-person speech for expressing the speaker's own subjective experiences, feelings, and intentions. The rationality appropriate to this communicative structure unifies the participants through a process of consensus formation. Consensus emerges from a procedure in which each participant shifts perspectives by adjusting and responding to the way others defend their positions. Thus, Habermas looks to a world of linguistic communication for a unifying process aimed at a shared way of thinking.⁸

According to Hannah Arendt, Marx reduces work to labour. Labour belongs to human life as a life integrated into the dynamics of nature. It acts to provide what the organism needs for the continuation and enhancement of life. Hence, it aims at consumption, which absorbs

⁷ Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995), III, 60–9.

⁸ Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, XI, 294–8, 311–16, 321–2.

products into the subjective life of the consumer. Unlike labour, work produces a world that exists and endures as an objective domain outside the living subject. This world provides a human environment set apart from nature, so that newcomers can enter existence within a human framework. Arendt makes her case against Marx by pointing to the way he defines human productivity as need-driven, oriented toward subjective satisfaction. The human organism, like any organism, interacts with nature in order to persist, to “reproduce” itself. Social relations reduce everyone to the same human needs and unite them in the shared project of maintaining life. Freedom means liberation from natural needs. It produces no world of its own, and hence it has no separate, enduring existence.⁹

Sean Sayers, in an essay published in this volume, challenges interpretations of Marx that reduce Marxist productivity to the material conditions of need fulfilment.¹⁰ According to Sayers, Marx conceives work not only as a way of satisfying need but also as a way of creating one’s self and transforming the world into the objectification of this self. A brief look at Marx’s early accounts of work seems to confirm the Sayers interpretation. Marx distinguishes between two ways in which work belongs to human life: as a way of maintaining physical existence; and as human consciousness objectified, given existence, as a world that the human self has made. The true sociality of work, which Marx calls species-being, belongs to work as the objectification and actuality of the human self. Work shared with others makes human life exist as the life of the world and presents to the individual’s consciousness the social dimension of the individual’s own life. This alone transforms human life into conscious life and free activity – that is, into a life that knows itself in the other. According to Marx, when the self’s involvement in the sociality of work becomes subordinated to the needs of physical existence, human work has become distorted and alienated.¹¹

Other texts, however, seem to favour Arendt’s interpretation. Marx finds the raw basics of work in the egotism of need fulfilment.¹² The

⁹ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, second edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), §1, p. 7; §13; §14, pp. 104–5.

¹⁰ Sean Sayers, “Freedom and the ‘Realm of Necessity’,” in this volume.

¹¹ Karl Marx, “Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte (1844),” in Marx & Engels, *Werke, Ergänzungsband: Schriften, Manuskripte, Briefe bis 1844, Erster Teil*, 512–18; “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts,” in *Karl Marx, Selected Writings*, ed. Lawrence H. Simon (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), 60–5.

¹² José Crisóstomo de Souza, “Marx and Feuerbachian Essence: Returning to the Question of ‘Human Essence’ in Historical Materialism” (in this volume), contests the idea that

individual labours in order to meet her or his own individual need. The work emerges, however, as something that also meets the needs of others. Thus, the spontaneity of need fulfilment reveals a dynamic connection between the individuality of the worker and the individuality of others. Work is spontaneously social. Marx assumes that if work operates in this undistorted way, the consciousness of the worker will experience the satisfaction of having created the life of the other by producing what answers the other's need.¹³ Communist production presupposes this communal mentality. It assumes from the outset that workers participate in a shared work project, that they work together to produce what serves them all.¹⁴

Andrew Chitty, in his essay published in this volume, sees a shift in Marx's position that might account for the ambiguity in the way Marx talks about work.¹⁵ According to Chitty, Marx at first conceived the basis of the state in a fundamentally Hegelian way. According to this conception, the state expresses and realises a communal spirit that wills the freedom of the people as a life together. The people live free by acknowledging one another as individuals belonging to the same free spirit. Chitty suggests, however, that late in 1842 Marx shifted his position and began to conceive the state as the expression of a society's mode of production. If we take seriously Chitty's suggestion, we must ask what kind of self sees itself in a world that the self has made. Is it the free, rational spirit conceived by Hegel; or is it the worker self conceived by the later Marx? Perhaps the Marx of 1844 retained a Hegelian idiom for a conception of society that was no longer Hegelian. If so, then the Hegelian way of talking about an objective social world no longer refers to a world animated by the spirit of a free, rational people. It refers rather to a world that expresses the worker self. Productivity, whether capitalist or communist, generates the self-consciousness of a worker. Moreover, Marx himself claims that the social or communal dimension of human life has its ground in the spontaneity of need fulfilment. How,

Marx sees productive activity as necessarily expressive of egoism, but he attributes such a view to Feuerbach.

¹³ Karl Marx, "Auszüge aus James Mills Buch *Éléments d'économie politique*," in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Werke*, Ergänzungsband, Erster Teil, 450–1, 459–63; "Excerpt Notes of 1844," in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, ed. L. Simon, 45–6, 50–3.

¹⁴ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* (Frankfurt: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1967), 88–9; *Grundrisse*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (London/New York: Penguin, 1973), 171–2.

¹⁵ Andrew Chitty, "The Basis of the State in the Marx of 1842," in this volume.

then, can it develop a consciousness equipped for any other kind of activity?

Arendt makes this point by describing the way modern productivity operates. Modern productivity produces for consumption. No matter how luxurious the product, no matter how elegantly or ingeniously designed, the product offers itself as something enjoyable or satisfying. A private matter, the maintenance and enjoyment of life, has taken over the public domain and the public consciousness. The people do not know how to use leisure time for anything else. The self objectified in this world is the consumer self. If Marx or his defenders respond by claiming that this is a productivity corrupted by alienation, Arendt can challenge them by asking how a productivity spontaneously developed from the egotism of need fulfilment can ground any other kind of mentality. Marx says that the human essence is oriented towards the production of itself as a world. But Marx does not explain how this orientation can be anything other than a more detached and self-conscious way of producing a world that satisfies the subjective needs of human life. According to Arendt, this reduces human existence to the pointless, ever-recurring cycle of labour and consumption.¹⁶

Arendt admits that labour can be redeemed by work, which produces something that lasts: a human world. But work itself has its own kind of pointlessness. Work identifies human beings as agents producing things that are useful for some purpose. For the worker mentality, everything has worth because of this usefulness. If, therefore, communal life is reduced to what emerges from the dynamics of work, the whole community becomes a system of usefulness with no overriding purpose for all this usefulness to serve.¹⁷ Arendt reserves the word “action” for a form of life that provides what is lacking in work life. Action produces human relationships. Human relationships exist in speech. Speech attaches a “who” to what goes on between persons. Who someone is speaks directly and immediately to the “who” of someone else, and thus they become involved with each other. This web of human relationships does not emerge in or belong to the domain of labour or work. It has its own domain, with labour and work in service to it. Arendt’s challenge to Marx stands firm, therefore, even if the Sayers interpretation succeeds. Even if Marx conceives the self as one who produces its self as an objective world, he misses the

¹⁶ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, §16–17.

¹⁷ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, §21; §33, p. 236.

point. Human life is not primarily about producing a world. Human life is about human relationships and the stories that go with them. Habermas makes a similar point by claiming that the Marxist project must be situated within a larger domain of human communication.

Arendt and Habermas disagree, however, about the way language relates human beings to one another. According to Arendt, action belongs to the special way in which human beings differ from one another. They differ not just as different instances of humanity, or as human beings with a distinctive set of characteristics, but as a unique someone that no one else is. Every human birth begins a biography, a life story, that is completely new and will never be repeated. Every biography wanders into the life stories of others and thus trespasses on what is uniquely their own. Speech creates relationships among these biographies. It attaches what goes on between persons to the unique someone that each one is. Language, therefore, always involves a dimension that challenges the untroubled unity of shared tasks and shared ways of thinking, because each speaker lives these as a life story exclusive to him or her. According to Habermas, language unifies society by becoming the vehicle of consensus formation. According to Arendt, in language communal life becomes the challenge of sharing the world with others while acknowledging their right to be radically different in it.¹⁸

The Marxism debate adds a new dimension to the questions posed by the liberalism debate. According to Marx, Habermas, and Arendt, individuality transforms itself into a communal life. Marx describes the way the individuality of work moves spontaneously into social relations and a shared work project. Habermas and Arendt describe the way language integrates the individuality of the speaker into the individual lives of other participants in the conversation. All of these proposals challenge the Hegel of Marcuse's critique, Bruno Bauer's rigorous republicanism, and Stirner's anarchism. A society committed to communal production (Marx), to the procedure of communicative reason (Habermas), to a communality that respects and forgives the radical uniqueness of its members (Arendt) does not need to be tamed by a repressive force, whether this is conceived as a heavy-handed, authoritarian governing authority or as a morality intolerant of particularity. Nor does it require an ego that rejects all integration into the lives of others, because it sees the lives of others as expanding rather than restricting the individual's own ego.

¹⁸ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, §1, pp. 7–9; §24–5; §33.

Moreover, the critique of Marx developed by Habermas and Arendt exposes the limits of a discussion that focuses exclusively on workplace structures and their relation to a governing authority. According to Habermas and Arendt, work and the pursuit of self-interest associated with it play a subordinate role in the creation of communal relations. The dynamics of individuality, particular interests, and social unity exist within the framework of interpersonal relations and the language that interprets them. A society that acknowledges the necessity of working out differences by participating in the formation of a communal consensus, or one that acknowledges the rights of persons or groups to be radically different in a shared world, will not interpret the dynamics of particular interests as the free play of self-absorbed egotism; and its members will not spontaneously act in an egotistical way. If, however, individuals live in a society that represents them as nothing but self-absorbed egotists, and if the economic system operates according to this view, then individuals will be forced to act that way just to survive.

Feuerbach's critique of religion, interpreted in this volume by Howard Williams, makes this same point in an even more dramatic way. According to the Williams interpretation, Feuerbach, like Kant, relocates what religion believes about God in what is fundamentally human. Feuerbach, however, finds the roots of religion not in pure reason but in the sensuous, emotional life of love. Love liberates us from confinement in our own individuality; it frees us to lose our self in others. Loss of self in the other, however, does not negate self-love. Concern for others assumes the legitimacy of the others' self-concern, which implicitly legitimates one's own. Thus, Feuerbach's anthropological account of religion describes a kind of liberation that preserves the value of an individual's self-concern together with the individual's identification with others. Williams suggests briefly that Feuerbach calls for the same kind of liberation in politics.

Suppose, then, a society in which preoccupation with one's own isolated interests and concerns is felt not only as a fault but also as a restriction that keeps us from being free and fulfilled human beings. Suppose this not as Bauer's negation of all particular interests but as the concrete loving that loses its self in others, cherishes the difference that identifies who they are, and frees the lover from the restrictions of his or her isolated self. In this kind of society, an individual would experience the call to a unified fellowship not as something imposed by an external authority or negating principle but as his or her own individual concrete self trying to expand its life by becoming identified with the lives of others. Could

this loving spirit operate within an economic system that embodies the rights of modern subjectivity and its particular self-interests?

Carol Gould, working with Marx's *Grundrisse*, describes a community of mutuality that might be able to integrate Feuerbach's loss of self in the concern for others with Hegel's insistence on the rights of the modern subject embodied in particular self-interests. Gould defines freedom as the individual's creating his or her self by projecting new possibilities and using these projections as guides for action. Freedom depends on production, which gives both the agent and the field of action a form explicitly related to the agent's design and purposes. Mutuality involves mutual recognition in which each individual acknowledges the free creativity of others not only as a right that must not be violated but also as a project in which this individual participates. The individual engaged in the realisation of her or his own possibilities actively supports others similarly engaged; and they do the same for him or her. This does not operate as the tradeoff of mutual self-interest. It operates as the individual's participation in the other's self-creativity, which the individual values for its own sake and actively supports as a purpose of her or his own. Thus, Gould proposes a philosophy of production or work that preserves the legitimacy of the modern subject's self-concern while connecting it to the concrete difference of another's self-creativity.¹⁹

The Marxism debate demonstrates the importance of asking about the interpretive framework within which the structures of governance and work operate. The same structures operating within different ways of articulating a society's values will not necessarily present the same problems or call for the same solutions. Hegel acknowledges this when he situates the structures of social life within the movement of history. Different nations, belonging to different epochs, play different roles in the rational development of the human spirit. In each national spirit, the human spirit interprets itself to itself (*sich für sich selbst auslegend*) in a different way. Only in the modern epoch does a national spirit reconcile the full development of individual subjectivity with the objective reality and substantial unity of a social whole.²⁰ In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel examines explicitly and systematically the way different interpretive frameworks affect the self's attitude towards itself and the society to

¹⁹ Carol C. Gould, *Marx's Social Ontology. Individuality and Community in Marx's Theory of Social Reality* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1978), 162–78.

²⁰ G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Meiner, 1955) §343–4, 347, 353, 360. See also 185 Remark, 273 Remark, 274. (Citations refer to section numbers [§] common to all editions and English translations.)

which it belongs. Working within conscious experience, the *Phenomenology* exposes different presuppositions and expectations operating in different national spirits; and it shows how these influence the way consciousness experiences the dynamics between the individuality of its self and its identification with the universality of social life. Language emerges in this examination as an essential element in this play of individuality and universality. We must look to the *Phenomenology*, therefore, for Hegel's answer to the questions raised by the Marxism debate.

If we combine the questions raised by the liberalism debate with the adjustments called for by the Marxism debate, we must ask the Hegel of the *Phenomenology* the following questions: Can modern subjectivity, isolated as it is in the exclusivity of the self, bring out of itself a communal life strong enough to withstand the divisiveness of its particular interests? If so, does this communality emerge in the dynamics of work, in the dynamics of language, or in some other social dynamic; and what role does a society's interpretive framework play in making this communality possible? Finally, does this communal life require a shared way of thinking, or can it live as the uniqueness that makes each person radically different from everyone else?

III

The *Phenomenology* describes a work dynamic similar to the one proposed by Marx in its account of individuality in action, which belongs to active reason. This form of reason conceives the rational as an attunement pre-established in the particular constitution of the self and the particular constitution of the world. The individual acts on her or his particular talents and interests to expose a coordination between self and world that already exists there. A self's interest in drama, for example, becomes activated in a world with a theatre culture.²¹ The action produces a work, however, that belongs to a world in which other individuals live and act. These other agents, with the same rational expectations as the first, expect the world to show itself as a world attuned to them. Hence, they interpret the first agent's action as a way of contributing to what orients

²¹ G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, edited by Hans-Friedrich Wessels and Heinrich Clairmont, according to the text of *Gesammelte Werke* Band 9, eds. Wolfgang Bonsiepen and Reinhard Heede (Hamburg: Meiner, 1988), 213–216/59–261 (M §394–6); 216–19/261–5 (M §398–401); 219–20/266 (M §404). (Cited as *PhG*. Citations refer first to the numerical ordering carried over from *Gesammelte Werke* Band 9, followed by the page numbers of the Wessels & Clairmont edition, thus: *PhG* 53/57.) See also note 22.

the world to their interests; and they find a way to claim the agent's work as their own.²² The first agent in turn expands his or her claims on the world to include not only this agent's own work but also the way others get involved in it.²³ But this makes the agent's original action appear dishonest to others. It reveals that the agent was not really concerned with making a contribution to their world, only with looking after this agent's interest in it. They, of course, are equally dishonest, because the expectations of reason are the same in the first agent and in them. Thus, individuality in action claims for itself the whole field of action, including the involvement of others in it. But in the process, it loses itself in the world's orientation to the claims of others.²⁴

Hegel, like Marx, begins his analysis of work with the individual acting individually, and like Marx, he finds that work spontaneously identifies the individuality of the agent with the concerns and agency of others. Why, then, does Hegel interpret this individuality as one that resists being absorbed into the communality of its work relations, whereas Marx finds no such resistance? This is because the *Phenomenology* gets to the form of active reason by developing what is implicit in the elementary structure of consciousness. Consciousness exists as the individual's immediate sense of self. It has two determinations. First, consciousness knows itself as a subject set off from its object. "Being conscious of" is conscious of being different from what it is conscious of. Second, consciousness belongs only to the one whose consciousness it is. Even if I see blue and you see exactly the same blue, my seeing it is not your seeing it. The *Phenomenology* begins within this isolated sense of self. Its task is to develop the necessary implications of this consciousness and thereby demonstrate what its true essence is.²⁵ The exclusivity of consciousness persists, therefore, in Hegel's analysis of individuality in action.

²² Hegel, *PhG* 220–222/266–9. *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), M §405–407. (Included within citations of the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, indicated as M followed by the section number, e.g. (M §73). Adjustments in the translation are indicated thus: < >.)

²³ Hegel, *PhG* 222–5/269–73 (M §408–14).

²⁴ Hegel, *PhG* 225–8/273–7 (M §415–18).

²⁵ Hegel, *PhG* 26–7/25–6 (M §32); 58–9/64 (M §82); 58–9/64–5 (M §84–5). Hegel insists that the procedure developed in the *Phenomenology* is scientific in the same sense that philosophy itself is scientific. Scientific procedure begins with a concept of the subject matter and proceeds by allowing this concept to develop its own necessary inferences. Hegel calls the elementary structure of consciousness, consciousness conscious of whatever (*etwas*), its concept. (Hegel, *PhG* 57–8/62–3 [M §80]; 61–2/68 [M §88]; *WL* [1832] 7–9/6–7 [M/27–8]; 36–8/37–9 [M/53–4]; 57–8/59–60 [M/71]).

The analysis also proves, however, that this exclusivity is necessarily absorbed into a world focused on the self-consciousness of others. This demonstrates the necessity of expanding the concept of work to include a connecting principle that integrates the active rationality of each conscious self with the same rationality operating in the works of others. Hegel tries this in two forms. Reason as lawgiver conceives the connecting principle as laws with a specific content, like “tell the truth” and “love your neighbour.” Each law exists both as a norm operating in the world at large and as a felt obligation in the individual’s sense of self.²⁶ Reason as criterion conceives the connecting principle as a principle detached from all content, the simple demand for no conflict between the norms that govern the individual’s action and the norms that operate in the world at large.²⁷ Because, however, the connecting principle in both forms is a principle of real action, the principle must operate in the dynamic of individuality in action. This dynamic plays itself out as a tension between the individual’s focusing the world on his or her exclusive self and the world’s absorbing the individual into its orientation towards other individuals with their own exclusive sense of self.²⁸

The account of individuality in action shows how work operates when it expresses the isolated sense of self that is each person’s own consciousness. Seeing the world as each person’s action involves relating the world to the exclusiveness of each person’s self-consciousness. Hence, transforming the world into a world that the self has made involves claiming for one’s exclusive self the world and all persons who live and work in it; and this pulls against the opposite movement, which absorbs the self into a world focused on the exclusivity of other self-conscious individuals. Thus, Hegel’s *Phenomenology* proves against Marx that the mentality of exclusiveness and the opposition in which it manifests itself is not a product of capitalism. It belongs to the essence of human beings as self-conscious subjects. But the *Phenomenology* also challenges the liberal paradigm and Stirner’s anarchism by demonstrating that exclusive subjectivity negates its own claim to be the real truth of the matter. By acting on this claim, subjectivity reveals a dynamic that reduces its exclusivity

²⁶ Hegel, *PhG* 228–30/277–8 (M §420–3).

²⁷ Hegel, *PhG* 232–3/281–2 (M §428–9).

²⁸ Hegel, *PhG* 230–2/278–81 (M §424–8); *PhG* 233–4/282–4 (M §430–1). Hegel makes his point against Reason as Criterion in three ways: (1) he shows how the universality of the world becomes individuated by its being for the individual; (2) he shows how individuality becomes lost in the universality of the world; (3) he shows how the necessary attunement demanded by reason becomes a contingent association.

to a factor in a life shared with others. Integration into a shared life is implicit in exclusive subjectivity itself. Because, however, the shared life emerges as an opposition dynamic in which each subjectivity asserts its own exclusive self, the integrating principle must not only integrate different subjectivities into a shared life, it must also identify this shared life with the exclusivity of different subjectivities. Hegel, like Marcuse, demands a unifying principle operating within the life of individuals. But he also demands a unifying principle that grounds their exclusive individuality and develops a communal life from the dynamics of this exclusivity.²⁹

IV

The *Phenomenology* examines the dynamics of the integrating principle in its examination of social self-consciousness or spirit. In the account of feudalism, Hegel introduces a form of language that captures the isolated exclusiveness of the conscious self. He begins by distinguishing "language authoritative as language" from other ways in which language operates in social life. Language articulating the laws and prevailing customs of a society or giving advice about the good of the kingdom says too much and too little. Too much, because it expresses not only the self of the speaker but also the subject matter or content of the speech. Too little, because it expresses the self only as related to this subject matter, not the self in itself. This analysis would also apply to the way language operates in communicative reason. Habermas describes this form of reason as a communication expressing different perspectives on a proposed plan of action, and thus as language in the service of a proposal. "Language authoritative as language" is different because it has the pure form of speaking as its only content. What, then, is the pure form of speaking?

Speech expresses what the self experiences as its own consciousness; and consciousness belongs only to the one whose experience it is. Speech brings this inner consciousness out into a domain shared with others and delivers it over to them. Unlike work, the speech does not become existent outside consciousness in the objective reality of the world. It disappears into the consciousness of the one who hears it. This other consciousness

²⁹ In another place, I have shown how the interpretation of Hegel proposed here as an interpretation of the *Phenomenology* also applies to the *Philosophy of Right*. See Ardis B. Collins, "Hegel on Language, Citizenship, and the Educational Function of the Workplace. The Marxist Challenge," *The Owl of Minerva* 32:1 (2000), 21–43.

has the same exclusivity as the first. It belongs only to the one whose experience it is. Thus, the inner, private consciousness of the speaker becomes existent as the inner, private consciousness of someone else. What, then, does it mean for language to say nothing more than what the form of speaking itself does? It means that the speaking surrenders the speaker's own exclusive singular self into the domain shared with others, to become existent as the exclusive singular self-consciousness of the one to whom the speech is spoken. If I say to another person "I am your friend," or "I am your wife, you are my husband," I do not give the other person my thoughts about something; I give the other person me. In this way, my isolated, unique subjectivity becomes existent as a shared self. I exist not only within my own self-consciousness but also within the self-consciousness of the one who hears my self-surrender and thus takes my self into the singular self that he or she is.

Hegel uses this personal commitment language to explain the dynamic between the exclusivity of the self and the communality of social life. In feudal societies, the noble individual says to the ruler, "I am your man, you are my king." The noble represents society identified with the special interests of an individual. The noble's speech surrenders the singular self of the speaker to the one who personifies society as a whole, and thus lives no longer as a self focused on his own special interests. He lives now as the king's man, finds his self in the self of the king, and thus becomes one who acts for society as a whole. Thus, state power becomes the will of the king.³⁰ If, however, society is personified in the will of a singular self, then state power functions in a singular way. The will of the king, and his will alone, has the authority and legitimacy of society itself. The exclusiveness of this will becomes manifest as arrogance, capriciousness, whim. This shows the individual's dependence on a will that is not this individual's own. The noble individual knows, however, that the king's power to act for the kingdom depends on the subject's willingness to be ruled by him. The oath of fealty masks rebellion waiting to happen.³¹

Here the *Phenomenology* makes the same point that Gans makes when he criticises the Prussian monarchy for refusing to implement procedures that would give it a "constitutional" form. The monarch's authority represents society as a whole if and only if the members of society are willing to acknowledge a ruler as one who speaks and acts for them. If the authority

³⁰ Hegel, *PhG* 275–8/334–8 (M §507–11).

³¹ Hegel, *PhG* 278–81/338–41 (M §512–18).

of the monarch stands above all social institutions, so that it appears as a will in no way accountable to the people, then princely power shows itself as an alien will whose overbearing authority provokes a resentment that can easily explode in rebellion. The tendency towards social disintegration exists not only in the divisiveness of special interests but also in the arrogance of a ruler who answers to no one.

The *Phenomenology*'s account of feudalism also introduces an explicit examination of the way a society's linguistic interpretation of itself can give the same social dynamic opposite forms. Feudal society breaks up in an opposition between a unifying function that acts against the individuality of its members and a diversifying function that resists and sabotages the unification of society in a single authority. This outcome reveals that society gets closer to the truth of social life if it explicitly knows this opposition dynamic as its fundamental spirit. Hence, the *Phenomenology* shifts to the examination of a society in which this knowledge exists as judgements articulated in talk. These judgements take opposite forms. Honest consciousness talks about a tranquil universality in which each facet of the culture – monarch and nobles, society as a whole, and society identified with individual interests – belongs to the same social spirit. But this way of talking is challenged by a disruptive consciousness that talks about a universal instability in which the service to society as a whole puts society in service to the self-concern of individuals, and the isolated, arrogant will of an individual asserts itself as the will of society as a whole.³² Thus, the opposition between unification and diversification breaks up in opposed ways of knowing and speaking about the spirit that operates in it. One way sees the opposition as a benign and tranquil dynamic displaying the same spirit identified with different aspects of social life. The other sees the same opposition as a unity divided against itself.

In his account of feudalism, Hegel exposes the full complexity of social life. The spirit of a society lives in the individuality of its members and their particular interests as well as in the social institutions and social roles that represent the integrity of the social whole. The opposition between individual interests and the concern for social unity divides society from itself. This division can be read in opposite ways: as a difference that leaves the spirit of society undisturbed and tranquil, or as a difference in which society is divided against itself. Hence, the spirit of a society is not determined by social institutions and social roles alone. Judgements and

³² Hegel, *PhG* 282–5/342–7 (M §520–4).

the talk that expresses them determine how we interpret the divisions that develop in social life, and this determines whether we acknowledge them as our own complex social life or reject them as alienating.

V

The *Phenomenology* brings together the issues associated with the work dynamic and the issues associated with the sociality of language when it conceives social life as a communality rooted in the spirit of moral conscientiousness. Morality asks whether the individual's participation in the social system remains true to a principle that is the same in each and every will. Moral conscientiousness knows this universality as the agent's own personal knowledge of what is good. No content, no law or principle, no social order, no natural inclination has a moral legitimacy of its own. Everything gets its validity from the individual's personal conviction.³³ As the spirit of a social world, however, the agent's conscientiousness must actually exist as the will of society itself. The agent accomplishes this by saying that the act is driven by the agent's personal sense of duty, and by declaring that the duty is an *acknowledged* duty, one that exists in the conscience of others as well.³⁴ Thus, conscientious talk plays the role proper to language as such. It expresses the inner, private self of the individual and gives it existence in those who hear the word and acknowledge it. But it also expresses the universality of this private self. The someone that no one else is asserts her or his self as one rooted in a spirit of conscientiousness that others share.

In conscientious action, however, this spirit becomes divided against itself. The agent's works satisfy the agent's own interest in a project; and they give the agent alone the satisfaction of having accomplished it. Hence, what the agent does manifests the agent's exclusive self-concern, which belies the universality claimed by the agent's conscientious talk. The self keeps itself uncontaminated by the restrictions of such self-concern only if it avoids all involvement in practical pursuits, because self-concern belongs to the structure of such pursuits. Hence, purity of conscience gives itself existence in the community of beautiful souls, who talk about nothing but the purity of their intentions. But the speech has

³³ Hegel, *PhG* 342-4/417-19 (M §634-8); 345-9/421-6 (M §641-6).

³⁴ Hegel, *PhG* 344-5/419-21 (M §639-40); 351-3/428-30 (M §652-4); 356-7/435 (M §662).

no substance, no solid existence, because it relates itself to no projects that give it reality in the objective world. The members of the community may be completely at one with one another. But they have left the world of nature, social institutions, and work unclaimed and untransformed by their moral fellowship.³⁵

Thus, conscientiousness becomes divided in opposed forms of moral life and the talk of hypocrisy. Those committed to a conscientiousness uncontaminated by individual self-concern express their opposition in judgemental talk that condemns the self-interest and hypocrisy of those engaged in particular projects. Those engaged in works and projects condemn as hypocritical a conscientiousness that withdraws from the field of practical pursuits. Judgemental talk abandons the world to moral indifference by condemning all practical pursuits; and it disowns the individuality of the community's members by refusing to acknowledge any conscience that preserves the uniqueness of the individual agent. As a result, the concern for unity becomes a particular concern, a vested interest. It leaves out a dimension of social life that the spirit of conscientiousness considers essential, namely the personal self of the moral agent and the agent's engagement with a world that must be transformed by moral action.³⁶

Each form of conscience counts as the conscience of the community. The community lives in the individuality and particular interests of real individuals engaged in conscientious causes. The community lives in the unity that overrules the divisions and self-concern of these actions. Each form of conscientiousness violates the community by opposing the other; and each asserts the rights of the community by standing firm against the other's opposition. This demonstrates that the spirit of the community exists in the whole opposition dynamic between the two positions. The singular, exclusive self-consciousness of conscientious individuals becomes a communal self-consciousness only if their commitment to the moral fellowship overrules their preoccupation with their own personal projects. But the unity of the moral fellowship cannot claim the world as its own, nor can it claim as its own the singular, exclusive self of moral individuals, unless it lets itself go in the personal projects of conscientious agents. This changes the way the spirit of society is conceived. Those who speak for the unity of the fellowship acknowledge that the life of the community lives

³⁵ Hegel, *PhG* 352-4/430-1 (M §655-6).

³⁶ Hegel, *PhG* 350/426-7 (M §648-9); 354-60/431-40 (M §657-68).

in the singular self-consciousness of each member and in the tensions created by the self-concern that operates in all practical pursuits. Those engaged in conscientious action acknowledge that what is personal to each belongs to a life shared with others. Each party acknowledges the other's opposition as its own spirit; and each hears its own opposition endorsed by the words of the other. In the words of forgiveness and reconciliation, each creates as another self the self-consciousness that opposes it.³⁷

Thus, Hegel's account of conscientiousness challenges the rigorous republicanism of Bruno Bauer. It demonstrates that Bauer's beautiful self, who acts from completely disinterested motives, cannot act without compromising itself, because interestedness belongs to the very structure of action.

VI

What, then, does Hegel's phenomenological examination of language have to say about the questions raised by the liberalism debate? We have seen Hegel analyse the dynamics of work to show that self-interest itself integrates individuals into a whole in which each individual's self-concern belongs to and is governed by a common principle. Hegel, therefore, finds a social bond operating within the work of individuals even when they are engaged in self-interested claims on the world. This common principle, however, does not do away with the tensions and oppositions that emerge in this dynamic. It lives in these tensions as a shared social life. Social life, therefore, breaks up into two opposite forms: the unity of social life that overcomes the divisiveness of self-concerned individuality, and the diversity of social life that overcomes the suppression of self-concerned individuality in the universality of the social whole. Hegel's account of feudalism exposes both the opposition and necessary connection between the particularity of individual self-interest and the universality of the will that overrules it. It shows how each dominates and is dominated by the other. It describes the way the language of the culture brings to consciousness opposite ways in which this connection is interpreted: as the unity of social life undisturbed by the divisions existent within it; as the divisiveness of social life unredeemed by the unified life to which these divisions belong. Hegel's account of conscientiousness reproduces these opposites in confrontation with each other, and

³⁷ Hegel, *PhG* 360–2/440–2 (M §670–1).

demonstrates that a society is free only if each explicitly acknowledges the other as another form of itself.

Hegel, therefore, answers "yes" to all the alternatives posed by our analysis of the liberalism debate, and yet disagrees with all of them. A society exists to make possible individual autonomy in all its individuality and particularity, as liberalism claims, and it allows individuals the freedom to live their own lives in their own way, as Stirner requires, but only because the shared life of a people must be lived as each member's individual self. Hegel, like Marcuse, demands a social bond operating within the work life of the people. Unlike Marcuse, however, he finds this integrating principle operating within the free play of individual autonomy itself; and he identifies this internal principle with the unifying force that remains detached from the divisiveness of self-interest and controls it by overruling and negating its divisions. Thus, Hegel acknowledges that a free society breaks up into two forms of life, allowing the free play of self-interest in one part while suppressing it for the sake of unity in another. Individuals are free only if they can live and act according to their own self-satisfying interests, and also transcend their differences by acknowledging the same communal life living in all of them. Therefore, freedom requires liberation from all particular interests, in oneself and in one's world, as Bauer claims, but only as one facet of social life. Freedom also requires the surrender of this disinterestedness in the self-satisfying, self-interested pursuits of individuals, so that society can acknowledge as its own the individuality and particularity of its members. Finally, freedom requires that each form of freedom acknowledge the other as a necessary challenge and complement to itself and as the same free spirit in another form.

Society meets these requirements, however, only if (1) the culture explicitly interprets itself this way and (2) the members of society give reality to this interpretation in the way they speak their commitments to each other. In a society where these conditions exist, self-interest is not the self-concern of an isolated individual doing the best for his or her self in a complicated, challenging world. Self-interest belongs to a life shared with others, explicitly presents itself as such, and acknowledges the self-concern of others as another dimension of its own communal life. Will this solve the problem of poverty without resorting to the divisive kind of power play recommended by Gans? It might. A citizenry whose consciousness has been formed by the spirit described in Hegel's account of conscientiousness and mutual forgiveness might be capable of the mutuality recommended by Gould. This spirit of mutuality might support a

project that would guarantee everyone's right to work. With this support, work associations might be able to engage in cooperative economic planning that would curtail excess wealth accumulation, rationally organise and distribute the work needed to fulfill society's needs, and control production. In a recent article, Joel Anderson has discussed hints in Hegel's own texts that suggest something of this kind.³⁸ We should notice, too, that in our own time, which seems far removed from the spirit recommended by Hegel's phenomenological account of conscience, Article 23 of the United Nations' *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* endorses the universal right to work.³⁹

VII

Let us look now at what Hegel's phenomenological account of language has to say about the issues raised in the Marxism debate. We have seen that Hegel, like Marx, finds a spontaneous impetus towards communality in the dynamics of work. Unlike Marx, however, Hegel finds this communality necessarily involved in tensions and divisions created by self-concerned individuality, which focuses the world and the involvement of others in it on each individual's exclusive self. According to Hegel, this self-concern belongs to the very structure of action. This leads Hegel to distinguish between the divisive connections played out in the domain of self-interested action and the unifying relations established by language.

Hence, Hegel, like Habermas and Arendt, acknowledges the need for a consciousness that transcends the work mentality; and this consciousness belongs to relationships established by dialogue, by persons speaking to one another. Arendt, however, reduces work to a project in service to the linguistic form of life.⁴⁰ Habermas interprets it as the limited domain of instrumental reason and material concerns.⁴¹ Hegel's account of social conscience interprets it as an essential dimension of linguistic life

³⁸ Joel Anderson, "Hegel's Implicit View on How to Solve the Problem of Poverty. The Responsible Consumer and the Return of the Ethical to Civil Society," in *Beyond Liberalism and Communitarianism. Studies in Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, ed. Robert R. Williams (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 2001).

³⁹ United Nations, 1948. "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," at www.un.org/Overview/rights.

⁴⁰ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, §12, pp. 94–5; §13, p. 97.

⁴¹ Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, XI, 321–2.

itself. The mentality of the worker is not limited by a preoccupation with need fulfilment and the production of what is useful. The worker acts to integrate the community's physical environment and social organization into the spirit of belonging that lives in the community's conscientious talk.

This spirit of belonging captures much more than the consensus advocated by Habermas. Consensus exists in the form of acknowledged duties articulated in conscientious talk. But action transforms these duties into egotistical self-concern. A dutiful project satisfies my interest as it does no other, and it gives me the satisfaction of having accomplished it. Thus, duty becomes identified with the dynamic of individuality in action, which plays itself out as the exclusivity of each self pulling against the same exclusiveness in others. A consensus articulated in acknowledged duties or shared norms has no power to heal this rift, because acting on the consensus surrenders it into the rift. Moreover, the interest in consensus takes opposite forms: committing oneself to a shared life that sets aside all differences, or committing oneself to a shared life that lives in the differences. The words of forgiveness acknowledge that the spirit of social life lives in both commitments and in their opposition to each other.

Hegel's account of social conscientiousness challenges Arendt's account of human plurality by claiming that a unifying principle operates within the uniqueness of each person. A shared social life governed by the spirit of conscientiousness acknowledges that each member of the community, as a unique someone, personifies the life of the community and commands the respect due to the community as a whole. In this kind of community, therefore, the intersection of different biographies is not trespassing. Who I am is my community's life individualised in me, and that life lives not only in me but also in the other who is not me. Conscientious talk makes this self-sharing real. It says to the other, "My conscience is yours and yours is mine." This is what surrenders the unique self of the speaker into the self-consciousness of the other and acknowledges the uniqueness of the other as another dimension of the speaker's self. Moreover, this self-sharing survives even the opposition between one person's self-concern and that of others, between the speech that speaks against the divisiveness of self-concerned action and the speech that endorses it. My life story is lived not only by me and in me, but also by others who belong to my life and take me with them into their life story, even when their life opposes mine.

Hegel, therefore, like Feuerbach, talks about a loss of self in others whereby the individual breaks free of the limitations imposed by his or her isolated self and expands into the self that others are. But Hegel introduces the self-surrender issue with a careful description of the way this loss of self becomes a reality between persons; and he gives us a careful analysis of the way self-concern is preserved within this loss of self relationship. Hegel's account also challenges Feuerbach by showing that the loss of self dynamic is not limited to relationships based on feelings of love. It belongs to political and moral relations, provides a framework for economic relations, and operates in relationships without suppressing the divisiveness and opposition that belong to the concrete reality of human existence. It is Hegel, not Feuerbach, who fully appreciates the complex conditions of real life.

VIII

Hegel's analysis of social conscientiousness can be expanded to take in the world of different nations and cultures and the development of human history. In morality, the self knows itself as one identified with the spirit of morality itself, and this spirit belongs to all moral beings. The morality of conscientiousness brings this spirit down into the agent's particular situation. It asserts the universal spirit of morality existent in one who belongs to a particular natural environment, a particular culture and its history, a particular configuration of interests and inclinations. But the conscientious individual asserts her or his self as the life of a spirit that lives in all moral beings. Thus, a unique individual's life story belongs not only to this individual's nation and culture but also to the whole history of the human spirit. Whether Hegel admits it or not, the spirit of conscientiousness calls for a cultural consciousness that acknowledges in other nations and cultures, in past and future human history, another dimension of the spirit that lives in one's own culture and time.

If, however, we use Hegel's account of conscientiousness to talk about international relations and the whole movement of human history, we confront the challenge of radically different cultures and value systems without a shared communal spirit to unify them. Arendt's account of human plurality seems better able to handle this, because it implicitly claims that we must share the world with others and ask forgiveness for the way our difference violates who they are, even if there is no shared

communal spirit at the heart of our differences. But perhaps Hegel could reply that a world committed to the forgiveness talk recommended by Arendt would give itself a communal spirit operating at the heart of these differences.⁴²

⁴² Warren Breckman, in "The Symbolic Dimension and the Politics of Left Hegelianism," in this volume, examines a debate among Left Hegelians focused on the way the modern world interprets the emancipation project. According to one interpretation, modern self-consciousness absorbs all meaning into itself. Other interpretations acknowledge a gap, a residual ambiguity and complexity, in which self-consciousness continues to reach beyond itself. Breckman himself expresses a concern for the preservation of ambiguity and complexity, to allow for and indeed to make possible the creation of new meanings. I am suggesting that by expanding Hegel's account of the conscientious community into the domain of international relations and global history, and by challenging it with Arendt's account of forgiveness and radical difference, I am situating Hegel's examination of freedom in a world of ambiguity and complexity. In my judgment, Hegel has much to offer here.

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